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MODERN ART

JULIUS MEIER-GRAEFE

~~ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY~~

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MODERN ART

AUTHORISED BY MR. WHISTLER

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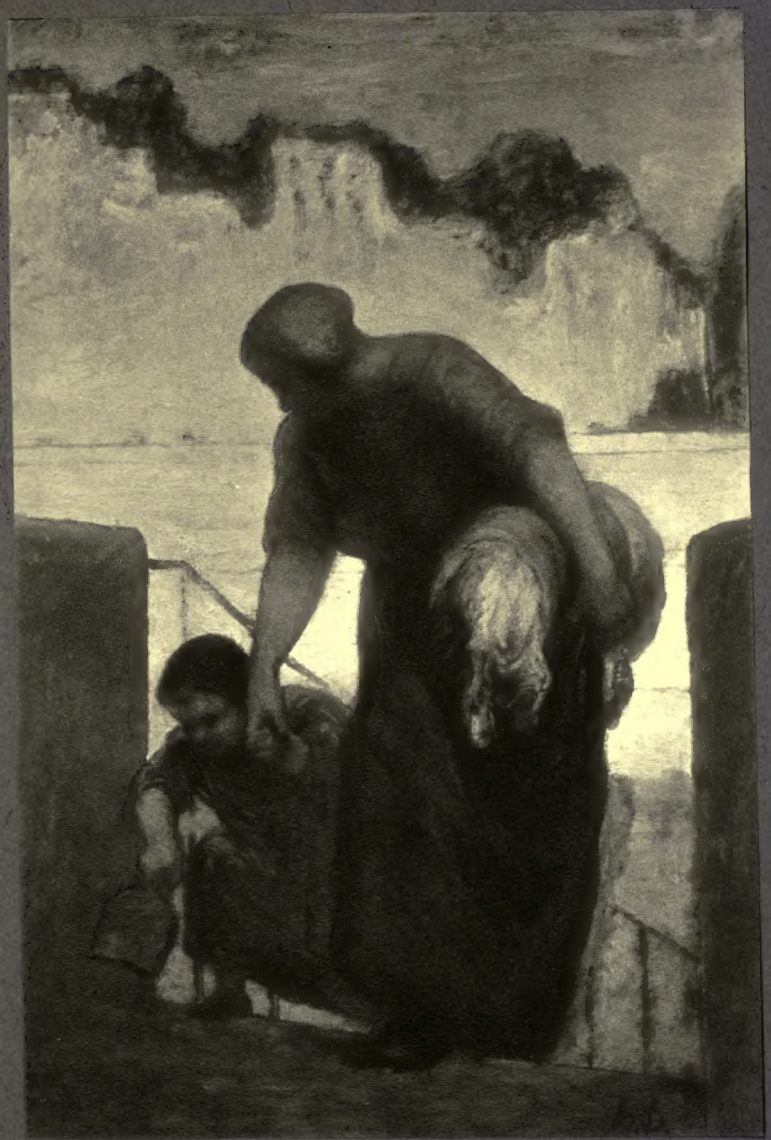
This book is the Life authorised and planned by Whistler himself, and it is based on material furnished by himself and by his family. Whistler was certainly fortunate in his choice, for Mrs. Pennell's admirable Life of Charles Godfrey Leland has proved her to be a very able biographer, and the master's long friendship with her and her husband gave them that opportunity of personal knowledge which no biographer who had only documents to work from could possibly possess. Many of the pictures were photographed before they left Whistler's studio, and it is certain that rarely, if ever, was so much material brought together to illustrate the life-work of a great artist. That his personality was as interesting as his work, all those experienced who came into contact with him. His wit, his brilliant conversation, the fun with which he baited his enemies, the determination with which he cherished and upheld his friends, the philosophy of his art and the clearness of his vision, all these delighted his circle day by day.

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN



DAUMIER: THE WASHERWOMAN (LA LAVEUSE)
BUREAU COLLECTION, PARIS

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MODERN ART

BEING A CONTRIBUTION TO A NEW SYSTEM OF ÆSTHETICS

BY

JULIUS MEIER-GRÄEFE

FROM THE GERMAN BY

FLORENCE SIMMONDS

AND

GEORGE W. CHRYSTAL

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ERRATA

Page 41, line 25, *for* "Kraus" *read* "Knaus."
" 70, *for* "W. J. D." *read* "W. F. D." on Plate.
" 153, line 43, *for* "I shall deal" *read* "I have dealt."
" 194, *for* "Marseille," *read* "Marseilles" on Plate.
" 236, *for* "Doria Pamfili Gallery" *read* "Hermitage, St. Petersburg" on Plate.
" 256 *for* "G. Manet" *read* "Edouard Manet."
Pages 276, 286 *read* "From a Drawing by Félix Vallotton."

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FRAGMENT OF THE LARGE MOSAIC AT TORCELLO

BOOK I

THE STRUGGLE FOR PAINTING

THE MEDIUMS OF ART, PAST AND PRESENT

I

Our collective artistic culture was bound to suffer, when the collective forces of art were concentrated in a special domain, that of pictures and statues. The fact is not minimised by the consideration, that this development was the work of a glorious history, originating in the most brilliant phases of modern culture. Nor can it be denied that the most splendid epochs of humanity achieved their great results without the omnipotence of pictures. It will hardly be contended that the Greeks lacked the instinct for artistic expression. The only modern nations that may aptly be compared with the Greeks in artistic importance, the Chinese and Japanese, certainly had pictures, but they had them as the Greeks had their sculptures and their wall-decorations; to such gifted nations as these, abstract art was not the final goal of artistic ambition, but merely one of the many emanations of their rich culture. These works are, no doubt, the most important evidences of their art that we now possess, but they are far from being the only ones; they crown a whole that is homogeneous throughout. They are, therefore, infinitely less significant of the degree of culture of their age than are works of equal importance in our own times. To the brilliant researches of German savants, more especially Furtwängler, we owe the beginnings of a personal estimate of Phidias. Yet who does not feel that even this greatest of artists was not the arbiter of his epoch, but a product of its glory?

The ideal interdependence of all artistic activities made art the possession of the whole people, and enabled them to understand it and to love it.

We moderns repeatedly see instances of great artists who live and work and die among us, and find recognition only after death, while the public acclaims the pigmy who is no sooner dead than he is forgotten. It was not so in the past. Among the pictures of the great masters in our galleries we find portraits of their wealthy and powerful contemporaries. How came the rich patrons of Florence, Flanders, and the Netherlands, of France and Germany, to choose the greatest masters of their time as their portraitists, whereas the wealthy and distinguished of our own age so often content themselves with the most miserably equipped? Obviously, they were better able to appreciate good painting. Yet then as now, princes busied themselves with affairs of state, and their artistic sense was not relatively higher above that of the general public than it is to-day. But the general standard was higher. The public was no more concerned with painting than it is now; then as now, it had other things to occupy it; but it was familiar with art. People found in painting the same excellence as in other things, chairs, tables, and clothing; they would have been astonished to find anything else. Painting was not much more highly esteemed than any other craft. It owed its privileged position solely

to the fact that from its nature, it existed mainly as the handmaid of religion; it adorned the church, the sanctuary. The origin of this adornment was practical; it filled the bare surfaces left by the architect, the real artist in the eyes of the masses throughout the Gothic period. Painting dealt only with predetermined themes; it had to translate religious conceptions; hence there is a certain essential difference between it and the art of our own day; subject was in no sense characteristic, for it was the same for all. This necessarily led to a purely artistic development, which the multitude followed. If it did not quite exclude critical errors, it reduced them to a minimum. The strict convention no artist could cast aside, did not prevent artists from becoming great; it served them as a shield against the public, who recognised something familiar even in their originality; the convention was a protection, not an impediment. But at the same time a close relation between artist and layman was not of such practical necessity then as now. The Church or the State was, broadly speaking, the sole patron. The artist troubled himself little about the public, for he had no immediate or practical dealings therewith. This circumstance had not only a material side; it contributed to the ideal relations subsisting between the two. The layman of the Gothic period looked at a work of art with other eyes as compared with ourselves. To a certain extent he was colder in his attitude; but he was also juster.

In these days, the pure work of art has been brought into immediate contact with every-day life; an attempt has been made to transform it utterly, to make it the medium of the æsthetic aspirations of the house, whereas this function belongs properly to the house itself and the utilitarian objects in it. We have tried to popularise the highest expression of art, something only significant when applied to the loftiest purposes, something, the enjoyment of which without a certain solemnity is inconceivable, or, at least, only to be attained in moments of peculiar detachment. We have succeeded merely in vulgarising it.

This is the source of the great error that retards our artistic culture. We revolve in vicious circles round the abstract work of art.

The painted or carved image is in its nature immovable. Not only because it was originally composed for a given space, but because the world of emotion to which it belongs lies wholly apart. This may be so powerful, that its association with the things of daily life cannot be effected without serious damage either to the one or the other.

The association of works of art with religious worship was therefore the most natural association possible. A heavenly illumination, itself possessed of all the attributes of divinity, art gave impetus to the soul in its aspirations towards the mystic, its flight from the sufferings of daily life, and offered the best medium possible for that materialisation of the divine idea, which the primitive man demands in religion. The ancient Greek worship, with its natural, purely sensuous conceptions, was the happiest basis for the artist, for in Greece religion and art were one thing: beauty. The god was the ideal of beauty.

When the temple became a church, art lost its original purity, and became the handmaid of the hierarchy. But religion was so deeply implanted in the souls of the faithful, that both to executant and recipient the service never lost the mystic atmosphere, the common bond, and all hostile antagonism was avoided. It was the Reformation that first drove the image from the temple, and gave to worship a form, the austerity of which excluded any sensuous enjoyment.

This was one of the many contributory impulses that brought about the confusion of æsthetics. Art was so closely bound up with religion, that it almost seemed as if the enlightenment that shattered the one, must be dangerous to the other. The mysticism of art and that of religion had formerly mingled their currents. As a fact, the former was no less obscure than the latter—who can say even now, what the essence of art is? But the pious and sometimes beautiful fable of religion had to perish, to make way, not for Luther's compromise, but for something radically opposite, science, by which the raison d'ètre of art remained unaffected. Indeed, as science could not satisfy the mystic yearnings of the soul, the sphere of art was, if possible, extended, though it could no longer be restricted to conventional forms.

The emancipation of man from the dogmas of the church was an advance. In the domain of art, where it destroyed the fixed convention as to subject, it might have become beneficent. But as a fact, it entailed retrogression. Painting was not yet strong enough to stand alone, or perhaps it was already enervated; instead, now that it was free from all objective constraint, of rising to the heights of pure art, sustained by its own convention alone, it gradually became vulgarised, and finally fell into perplexities from which it had been preserved in the early ages of culture.

A three-fold watchword inspired the political and social contests of the new age: Freedom, Truth, Equality. We think we have the first two; and our generation is warring for a verdict as to the third.

Art thought herself bound to take part in the contest. As on other battlefields, the three sections of the ideal were upheld simultaneously, and as in these again, the fight was sharpest and most decisive over the first two, Freedom and Truth.

Broadly speaking, the trilogy, taken absolutely, is Utopian, and even nonsensical; but in social matters, the ideal regulates itself in a rational manner. In art, where such was not the case, where the extravagance of the postulate was far in excess of its good sense, it worked most mischievously.

Art was to be free—but free from what? The innovators forgot, that freedom implies isolation. In her impulsive vehemence, art cast away the elements that made her indispensable to man. The vaster the wide ocean of unbounded aims before her, the more distant was the terra firma which had been her home. She lost her native land.

The goal was of the vaguest, and therefore, it was dubbed truth. For the most part it was a negation of the very essence of art, which is neither truer nor falser than an earthworm, or a star, or any imaginable thing to which conceptions such as that of truth have no possible relation. But the formula persisted, and the materialisation of the abstract was carried so far, that Art was humiliated by a crude comparison with Nature. Because conceptions of certain aspects of Nature figure among the technical equipment of great artists, because they faithfully reproduced things the eye is supposed to have seen in woods and meadows, they were pronounced "truer" than others who did not use these means, or who used them differently. Men began to forget that to the artist, woods and meadows can be no more than a purely mechanical medium such as his brushes or his palette, or a thousand other things he supposes, rightly or wrongly, to be necessary to him, but which are as foreign to the enjoyment of others as those rotten apples which a certain German poet needed for his inspiration!

It must be understood that the artist did not think thus. It was the layman. He took to reflection where he had formerly given himself up to sensation, and

his attempt to arrive at a rational understanding of art resulted in schism, as formerly in the case of religion. It was impossible for him to see the thing as it was, and not knowing how justifiable was his repulsion to an incomprehensible abstraction, he caught at the first tendencies his caprice presented to him, and directed art in accordance therewith. The immediate result was that adroit persons at once sprang up, who exploited these tendencies. They were greeted with acclamations.

This alone is a sufficient explanation of the ever-increasing disproportion between artists and those who impertinently call themselves such. And at the same time, it accounts for the antagonism of the layman to art. In earlier times the mysticism of the church drove the believer into the mysticism of art. He offered no resistance. One awe completed the other. But later he had made up his mind to a personal interest in the matter, and when this was not satisfied, he was repelled.

The conception of equality in the secularisation of art tended to positive aberration. It did not attain to the authority of a shibboleth, like the two others, but it danced like an ignis fatuus before the eyes of both artists and laymen. Art was to lay aside its majesty. Even here tyranny was supposed to have entrenched itself. It was to present itself humbly, soberly, plainly, realistically. But when it came, men knew not what to make of it, and in lofty scorn of the equality that had been won, it turned to serve the few, the elect.

Art could only have remained equal and universal on universally accessible ground. This it had lost when it was severed from the church. An attempt was indeed made to replace the religious ideal by the patriotic passion. But setting aside the fact that there was no appropriate stage for the display of the results, this ideal, though perhaps a more possible substitute than any other, lacked all the elements necessary to a tradition. It was, above all, too mobile, too closely related to contemporary passions and personalities. It gave us the historical picture, in which the public saw only the history; the enthusiasm or pain that it evoked could not be laid to the account of art.

That works of art should be easy of acquisition by purchase was one of the principles of the theory of equality. Every one was henceforth to be able to buy art. All that was needed was money. This, again, led to a direct negation of the shibboleth.

It was only in those earlier days, when proprietary rights were not associated with art, that the relation of the layman thereto approached the socialistic ideal. Art was for all, for it belonged to no one. It stood above individual greed, a highly communistic symbol in an age that in all else was far indeed from the socialism of our day. Now it has become the expression of our terrible class distinctions. It is only accessible to an aristocracy, whose domination is the more sinister, in that it is not based solely on rank and wealth, that is to say, on things by the division of which the ardent socialist hopes to re-establish the social equilibrium. There is nothing so unattainable, for the enjoyment of it presupposes an abnormal refinement of æsthetic perception, which has become as rare as genius itself. Nowadays, one must not only have a great deal of money to buy art, but one must be an exceptional creature, of peculiar gifts, to enjoy it. It exists only for the few, and these are far from being the most admirable or beneficent of mankind; they seem, indeed, to show all the characteristics of the degenerate. Loftiness of character, or of intelligence, are not essential to the com-

prehension of art. The greatest men of our age have notoriously known nothing about it, and what is more remarkable, artists themselves often understand it least of all. Artists have talked more nonsense about art than any other class of men. Modern artistic culture can scarcely be accounted an indispensable element of general culture any longer, for the simple reason that art has ceased to play a part in the general organism.

Art has not so much as a decisive influence on our taste, even among those who have penetrated most deeply into the secrets of artistic enjoyment. We have the clearest evidence of this in the indifference with which people, who surround themselves with the most costly works, regard the general decadence of industry. They, the elect, who possess their masterpieces, not only materially, but psychologically, tolerate the most glaring breaches of taste in the rooms where their treasures hang. They, who have shown themselves competent to choose the best among the best, amaze us by their utter insensibility in such matters as their clothing, and their daily surroundings. The one thing swallows up all the rest; their worship has become mania.

This attenuation of æsthetic exigence tends further to reduce their demands on the work of art itself to a minimum. They tolerate the most glaring defects, nay, even to a certain extent absolute incapacity, if some single quality is preserved, which approves itself as unique.

In the course of our appreciations, we shall make due allowance for the relative justification of such estimates in individual instances; we may even fall under the spell of the particular so far, as to be unable to keep the general always before our eyes. I register my protest here at the outset the more emphatically, in the hope that it may be strong enough to curb my own obsessions. It is the vow of the "infirm of purpose," his hand already on the door of the tea-house, whose inmates beckon to him from behind the reeds.

II

The incomprehensibility of painting and sculpture to the general public has been shrouded in a veil of pretentious exposition. The amount of talking and writing about art in our day exceeds that in all other epochs put together. The increase of sociability rising from increase of wealth made it necessary to invent suitable occupations for unproductive energies. Chatter about art became a highly popular form of such amusement; it requires no special preparation, no exertion, is independent of weather and seasons, and can be practised in drawing-rooms! Art has become like caviare—every one wants to have it, whether they like it or not. The immaterial elements of the former give a certain intellectual tone to the sport, which is lacking in a feast of caviare; it is therefore complacently opposed to such material enjoyments. The discussion of art in Germany (the home, par excellence, of such discussion) originated in the dark days of the nation during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, when men were dreaming romantically of the great things they lacked. Nevertheless, it was more fruitful than it is now; it was the sphere of great personalities, and the origin of an idealism, which, though impotent, was sincere. Nothing of all this has survived but a subsidiary function. It is the form of

entertainment affected by families who do not give expensive dinner-parties. It has become the feudal cognisance of the aspiring bourgeoisie, as necessary to the well-educated as some indispensable garment.

Love of art, however, especially the kind of love that goes beyond platonic limits, becomes rarer as those who meddle with it multiply in every land. Purchase has become the touchstone of such affection; like marriage, it is a practical token of sentiment, and even to the artist, this evidence is generally more important than the impulse that inspired it.

It can hardly be otherwise now. If art is to be anything, it must not arouse merely that languid attention which people manifest when they politely approve something as "very interesting." It is not enough that it should inspire the pens of scribblers, and develop itself alone, and not others. In the form to which it is confined to-day—that of picture or statue, a marketable commodity—it could only exercise an influence by fulfilling the purpose of other marketable things: that of being purchased. But the popularisation of art is rendered impossible by the extravagant prices commanded by recognised works of art and demanded for those that are not so recognised, by a frantic, absurd, and unhappily, thoroughly dishonest traffic. I can conceive of rich people who would refrain from the purchase of pictures out of sheer disgust at the trade, a desire to keep their hands clean. The purchasing amateur is a personality made up of the most obscure springs of action. The absolutely incalculable fluctuations in prices, the influence of fashion, nowhere so demented as in this connection, the desire to go on improving his collection, *i.e.*, to bring it up to the fashionable standard of the moment, forces the collector to be always selling, to become the shamefaced dealer, who is, of course, the most shameless, and who introduces additional elements of disorder into a commerce already chaotic. The result is that there are, as a fact, no buyers, but only dealers, people who pile their pictures one above the other, deal exclusively, or almost exclusively, with each other, and have no connection with the real public. Statistics, showing how few are the hands to which the immense artistic wealth of the world is confined, would make a sensation. A great London dealer once told me that he had only three customers! Durand-Ruel, of Paris, has several times had certain famous Impressionist pictures in his possession at progressive prices, rising some 1000 per cent. each time, and the purchasers have often been the same persons on several occasions.

Such conditions reduce the æsthetic usefulness of a work to a minimum. Pictures become securities, which can be kept locked up like papers. Even the individual, the owner, ceases to enjoy his possession. Nine-tenths of the most precious French pictures are kept for nine-tenths of the year in magnificent cases, to protect them from dust. Sales are effected as on the Bourse, and speculation plays an important part in the operations. The goods are scarcely seen, even at the sale. A typical, but by no means unique, example is afforded by the late Forbes collection. It consisted of I forget how many hundreds or thousands of pictures. To house them, the owner rented the upper storey of one of the largest London railway stations, vast storehouses, but all too circumscribed to allow of the hanging of the pictures. They stood in huge stacks against the walls, one behind the other: the Israels, Mauves, and Marises were to be counted by hundreds, the French masters of 1830 by dozens; there where exquisite examples of Millet, Corot, Daubigny, Courbet, &c., and Whistler. Although the stacks of pictures were held up by muscular servants, the enjoyment of these

treasures was a tremendously exhausting physical process. One walked between pictures; one felt capable of walking calmly over them! After five minutes in the musty atmosphere, goaded by the idiotic impulse to see as much as possible, and the irritating consciousness that it was impossible to grasp anything, every better instinct was stifled by an indifference that quenched all power of appreciation. The deathly calm one broke in upon, as one toiled sweating through these bare gigantic rooms where there was no space to turn, the whistling of the engines, the trembling of the floor as the trains ran in and out below, seemed to inspire a kind of strange fury, a silent longing to destroy the whole lot.

Who would be the loser if this were actually done? If anything could justify anarchism, it is the knowledge that the greatest artists toil in poverty, to enable a few dealers to grow rich after their deaths, and a few fanatics to hoard their works in warehouses. The most notorious vices are not so grotesquely irrational as this mania for hoarding, which, owing to its apparent innocuousness, has not yet been recognised as a malady. All the famous collectors of Paris, London, and America are more or less tainted with this disease. We enter their houses full of eager anticipation, and quit them with a sigh of relief, half suffocated by the pictures that cover every inch of wall-space, and wholly depressed, not by a feeling of envy, but by the thought that there are people who have voluntarily accepted the torture of spending their lives among all these things.

Even if a wiser economy should improve the conditions we have described, it will never be possible to induce a better appreciation of art by commercial means. Hence all the fine ideas of "popular art" are doomed to remain mere dreams. It is materially impossible to produce pure works of art at prices that will bring them within the means of the masses. The Fitzroy Society in England, and the publishers of the prints for the Rivière School in Paris made the attempt, and in Germany Thoma was inspired by the same ideal in the production of his lithographs. All these attempts have only served to stimulate the collecting mania. Every speculation that panders to this instinct is successful, whether it deals with postage stamps or pictures. There is no question of æsthetic principle in the matter. I believe that the plebeian would really prove accessible to a revival of artistic influences, if he could possess a picture of his own, to hang up. But a work of art could never be cheap enough for this, for if it cost but tenpence, the poor man will always prefer to save his tenpence, towards the purchase of something necesssary to his physical well-being. An artistic propaganda that relies on purchasable and abstract works of art must always fail. It can only succeed by means of industry, by producing things which combine artistic and utilitarian qualities. As long as we neglect these, we need not wonder to find the artistic sense of the lower orders more depraved than at any other period of the world's history.

The social struggle is breaking down class distinctions; the intelligent outcast of to-day is the millionaire of to-morrow. Nothing opposes the rise of the proletarian in the modern state, and he brings his lack of culture with him into his higher sphere. The man who has had no æsthetic stimulus in his period of development will, as a rule, have no lofty requirements when chance has made him an influential member of the community, though he may simulate these, and so add a new source of error to those already present.

III

So much for the material side of the question. This is in itself decisive—discussion on any other basis can only deal with the conditional, and with compromises. Let us suppose for a moment that we could realise a state of things in which every citizen should not only have a fowl in the pot, as the good king wished, but a picture in his room. What can the man who is blessed with taste and wealth buy in these days?

Every sensible person who buys things will be governed by his requirements. When he purchases a picture, he will ask: can I make use of it? and this will lead him to the further inquiry: can I hang it up in my house?

And here the tragedy of contemporary art forces itself upon us, the lack of all steady connection between art and purpose, the impossibility of establishing an intimate relation between producer and consumer. The artist cannot attempt this, for in general he does not know for whom or for what his work is destined. Experience has taught him that he will do well to make it as adaptable as possible, easily moved, and suitable for a great variety of interiors; in other words, not intrinsically valuable to its possessor, but valuable as an object of barter. These conditions are disastrous to the ideals of the artist, who feels it to be incompatible with his freedom to be fettered by such limitations, and to allow his creations to be governed by anything but his artistic conception.

Directly the layman is brought into established relations with art, the absolute value of art gives way to the relative value. The appreciations that determine this are very complex.

The question of locality, the axiom that a work of art can only be perfectly executed for a given place, is by no means decisive. This idea rests on a misconception which is practically refuted every day, though this refutation is far from favourable to modern methods of creation. The axiom is not even sound as applied to the works of the old masters, although these were always more or less architectonic in structure. A beautiful figure of a saint in the porch of an early Gothic church remains beautiful, even when it is removed; it even retains a considerable part of its charm in surroundings that have no sort of relation to it. A work of art in which the architectonic relation to the original place is less intimate, as is the case with most easel-pictures, may change its home still more readily; it may even gain by the change.

The past decade has given us excellent museums, which have settled this question satisfactorily. The majority of "Old Masters" which adorn these galleries, show to greater advantage here than in the places for which they were painted, places where the light was often defective, or where it was impossible to get at a right distance from the picture. We have taken up the rational position, that the essential in these matters is a condition realised in the great museums: the picture should be seen in the most favourable manner possible. We have not the same eyes as those for whom these things were originally made, and we have every right to use all the means at our disposal to enhance our enjoyment of them.

Our enjoyments differ from those of the original spectators. We have invented new pleasures. We may instance the grouping together of works by the same artist or different artists, and of different periods, on the same wall, and the effect of one wall so arranged on another; such and many other combinations

MOSAIC IN MURANO CATHEDRAL

possible in our museums have, in spite of all antiquarian logic, an artistic charm which was lacking to these works in former times.

The museum is perhaps—or might be—an ideal substitute for earlier vehicles of art. It is the purely neutral spot, that serves beauty alone—or might serve it—and knows no other end, or need know none. It has already all the elements of an institution of which we may justly be proud.

All the more irrational, therefore, is it to confound the house, the dwelling, with these constitutionally holy places, and to interchange functions so radically opposite. Everything, or almost everything, that is necessary in the one is out of place in the other. Why then should the layman buy pictures at all? If we go to the root of the matter, it seems as if he bought them primarily to get rid of them. The disinterestedness of certain rich people who buy works of art to present them to museums, does not modify the grotesqueness of this state of things.

We may ask if our dwellings are better adapted for the display of pictures than those of earlier periods, which contained few, if any, abstract works of art, in our sense of the term.

The dwelling-house of to-day has lost its formal relation to the age. Save for non-social, practical considerations, which express themselves in a certain comfort and in the employment of space to the best advantage, it shows a lack of cohesion with our lives. Contrary to the usage of former times, our sphere of action is now generally outside our houses. This action itself has changed, no less than its field; mental effort tends more and more to take the place of physical exertion. The men whose activity is most prolific in these days, that is, whose wills have the strongest influence upon production, use their limbs and muscles the least. The intellectual apparatus accordingly requires care and protection in its leisure.

The dwelling has become a place of recuperation, and this determines the character of the busy man's domicile.

As places of recuperation, our dwellings have, as a fact, become better adapted for artistic elements, and even for abstract works of art. We may for the moment set aside the dismal fact that the pure work of art is generally the only artistic thing in the house, and quite without relation to all the rest. Such conditions only make it the more essential, if man is not to renounce every loftier stimulus from without. But if the work in the house is to have any influence, in conditions so far removed from those of the earlier vehicles of art, it must be subordinated to these new conditions. It is not the chief object that draws us to the place containing it, as in the case of a museum; we do not approach it with the devoutness of the soul athirst for mystic rapture, as formerly in a church. Comfort is the essential in this modern shrine, and a picture that disturbs our sense of well-being is clearly out of place in a house.

This sense of comfort is certainly not to be satisfied merely by artistic qualities. The very works that make the deepest impression upon us, are least adapted to domestic combination, because the sensuous value that might promote satisfaction, is present in them in forms unsuitable to our four walls or our hundred prepossessions. There are things one admires, and others one wishes to possess. That which decides between them is a whole world, and not a kind of hygiene, which teaches us to live with certain sensations, because they demand intellectual effort and sacrifice.

Art under such conditions ceases to be divine; she is no longer the enchantress

who brings men to their knees before her, but rather a gentle little housewife, who surrounds us with tender attentions, and eagerly produces the sort of things that will distract tired people after a day's work.

Such a function is beneath the dignity of art. She could not accept it, if she was to remain what she had been in the past. It did not embrace her whole domain; it belongs by right to utilitarian art.

We have come back to the same point on our circle: If the uses of art change, art itself must change. If it cannot have the place it requires, it becomes meaningless. If it stands alone, it perishes. To restrict our artistic requirements to abstract painting and sculpture is a folly of the same order as that of the madman in the fable, who wished that everything he touched might turn to gold. Abstract art is a holiday delight. We are not a race of pleasure-seekers, and we are proud to say so. Our most rational idea is to divide, not wealth, but work, to see an era when there will be no drones, when every one will exert himself for the common good. In such a state the amateur will cease to exist.

IV

For what then do artists create, pending what is generally the posthumous consummation—that accumulation of their works described above?

Some for an unattainable object, every step towards which is marked by tears and blood, an ideal that can only be described in somewhat metaphysical rhetoric: the satisfaction of a conscience that has no relation to extrinsic things, of a supernal ambition, grandiose and dazzling in its conscious determination, in its consistent effort towards the elusive goal, amazing in the unconsciousness with which it achieves results that would seem only possible to the most strenuous toil. Creation for the sake of creation.

A far-seeing idealism sustains them, the hope that they will succeed in giving a new form of beauty. A blind optimism leads them, even when most neglected, to believe that they will be appreciated by some, that some will share the new joys they have discovered. And when the futility of such hopes is demonstrated, when they see their works passed over, or, worse still, bought by purchasers who have none of that intimate delight in their creations on which they had counted, they withdraw into themselves and do their greatest work.

Sometimes that which appears to them in their confident self-knowledge their greatest work, is recognised by the enlightened at last, and becomes an eternal possession, a lasting element in after generations of artists, in whose works it lives in another form, completed by new achievement. It passes into the artistic heritage of the nation, and finally plays its part in national culture. Others fail; not that their self-knowledge is at fault, but that their talent or their intelligence falls short. Their numeric preponderance is so great, that they completely crowd out the few, and the limited demand of the public for pictures is supplied almost exclusively by them. I suppose that to every thousand painters of the one class, there is not more than one of the other. Imagine such a proportion in any other calling! The artist can mislead the public more easily than can a man of any other profession, for setting aside the affinity of the herd for all that is superficial, a sort of halo surrounds the painter; he profits by a number of institutions very favour

able to mediocrity, which give a certain importance to the métier as such, and are readily turned to account by the adroit.

Foremost among these is the art-exhibition, an institution of a thoroughly bourgeois nature, due to the senseless immensity of the artistic output, and the consequent urgency of showing regularly what has been accomplished in the year. This institution may be considered the most important artistic medium of our age.

It would have a certain appositeness as a shop in the grand style, arranged with a luxury befitting the wares. But this purpose, which seems to be included in the general scheme, is quite subsidiary, as may be seen from a glance at the sale statistics.

Artists acquiesce in the system, because if they held aloof, their last means of expression would be denied them. They want, at least, to let their work be seen, and see it themselves, even among that of a thousand others, even for a few months, even under barbaric conditions. What becomes of it after the exhibition is indifferent to them. It is enough if the picture fulfils its purpose at the exhibition, attracts attention, is discussed by the critics, and, perhaps, even—this is the culminating distinction !—receives a medal.

To secure these results in competition with the thousands who are bent on the same ends, it is above all things necessary that a picture should have certain qualities that distinguish it from the rest. If the artist is bold enough, he makes it very large, or at all events very insistent, that it may strike the eye, even if badly hung.

It is obvious that under such conditions the purpose achieved by competition in other domains—that of promoting the selection of the best—can never be fulfilled. A variety of those base impulses, which always urge on the compact majority against the loftier individuality, play their part in the result. Rarely, indeed, has a genius been brought to light through these channels. The greater artists avoid these exchanges, and even the amateur does not frequent them, since quantity is not the only thing he craves.

The remnant of artistic sensibility that lingers in our age bids fair to be systematically crushed out by these exhibitions. If perchance any of the palatial barracks that house them should survive for posterity, they will be more damaging to us than any other relic. There will be persons who will go through these galleries in the spirit in which we visit ruined castles, and the rusty picture-hooks will be to them like gruesome instruments of torture.

Pictures once hung on these hooks . . .

This is the end of the history of pictures. We have, at least, the comfort of knowing that we can sink no lower. Once the symbol of the holiest, diffusing reverence in the church, and standing above mankind like the Divinity itself, the picture has become the diversion of an idle moment; the church is now a booth in a fair; the worshippers of old are frivolous chatterers.

TRADITIONS

PAINTING is the art of charming the eye by colour and line; sculpture charms the eye by means of form in space.

As the eye, in common with every other organ of sense, has a tendency to reflect its perceptions on the understanding, *i.e.*, that accumulation of experience which checks new perceptions by those already accepted, and as it resists every illusion that might jeopardise its earlier acquisitions, the charm of art cannot be summarily explained as illusion. Were this otherwise, susceptibility to its influence would presuppose defective powers of understanding, and this is contradicted by actual facts. Though persons of high attainments have lived all their lives ignorant of the charm of art, it is not, on the other hand, to be denied that the keenest thinkers have been very susceptible to artistic influences. To explain this, we must assume the existence of certain brain-parts having peculiar functions; these, in some individuals, act simultaneously with the parts on which the concentration of the understanding devolves. When a beautiful new flower meets the eye, the senses announce it to the understanding as a botanical specimen; in certain spectators, the other portion of the brain will be simultaneously occupied solely with the form and colour of this new thing, regardless of the question whether these qualities belong to a flower, *i.e.*, to a familiar species, which, as such, may suggest all sorts of extra-æsthetic—for instance, utilitarian—considerations. It may be presumed that all men are provided with this brain-power more or less, that it may be cultivated or allowed to dwindle, and that not only individuals but whole races are more richly endowed with it than others. Like the other brain, it has its store of experiences, and the conscious sum of such experiences known as logic in the one, is called æsthetics in the other. This, like logic, is enlarged by every new experience, by every new enjoyment, and thus enriches not only itself, but every individual enjoyment.

So far, all is simple enough. The difficulty arises from the undeniable relations between the two brains. The great question nowadays is, whether the one can work without the other. It is at least certain that perfect results will not be achieved, either in logic or æsthetics, if the two are divorced. Artistic enjoyment may be promoted or hindered by these relations; there may be works, that set both in motion, that act as a strong stimulus not only to the æsthetic, but also to the intellectual apparatus, and call all the powers of the mind into play. There are works that do not merely impress as beautiful;—they may even do this to a comparatively slight degree—but with their beauty, they combine a depth of experience that goes beyond all experience achieved by intellectual processes, and gives the soul an instantaneous sense of enlargement and enrichment. Such works were not vouchsafed to the classic age of art, superior as it was to ours in beauty of form. They first became possible, when traditions relaxed somewhat, and permitted an isolated genesis of artistic genius, under circumstances that were even opposed to the spirit of the age: Michelangelo—Rembrandt.

BENOZZO GOZZOLI: NOAH'S VINTAGE (LES VIGNES)

FRESCO CAMPO SANTO, PISA

Michelangelo reveals to the beholder a beauty that emerges from form, whereas the ancients, of whose forms he reminds us, contained beauty in complete solution. The antique stands still and allows us to approach it. Michelangelo hurls beauty into us. A power which seems compounded of the power to create forms inherent in thousands of artists, gives the subject he handles an expression that turns the strongest peculiarities outwards, and makes them credible and acceptable. Faith grows strong, because it accomplishes a work of its own in every spectator, and anchors itself in the soul of each with reflections peculiar to each. It reaches its consummation in a manner directly opposed both to the unreflecting antique worship of beauty and to the mysticism of our early hieratic art. It may become so powerful as to go far beyond all the logical means that approach the same subject, and when, as with Michelangelo, it treats of divinity, it may give mortals a foothold, that will enable them to approach the Godhead by new paths. Rembrandt achieves the same result by means that have no sort of apparent relation to the antique.

This effect is happiest, where it appears utterly unconscious. If art is to have its true value, it must give its first rapture in the sphere that is peculiarly its own, re-acting from this on the intellect, not vice versâ. A work may express the deepest truths, and yet fail utterly to satisfy artistic requirements; a conscious insistence on ideas will always injure the artistic side. Michelangelo did not always hold fast this truth. Wherever he appears as the analyst, his art foregoes something of that legitimate effect he never fails to produce in synthesis. His famous *Creation of Man*, which is often pronounced his greatest work, is an extraordinary example of intellectual invention. In spite of the mastery with which the composition utilises the idea, the immensity of the giant is not so impressively suggested here as in certain studies of the nude, which are by no means definite reproductions of actual facts, but mere fragments. But this does not prevent them from inspiring thought in those who behold them. The man of a special capacity will be more easily swayed thereby than another; the direction in which his thoughts will move will be determined by a hundred things—his degree of culture, his temperament, &c., and not least, by his momentary mood. No two persons will follow out the same train of thought before such works, but both will perceive the same force, urging their thoughts onward.

In the new art we can trace two main currents; in one synthesis predominates, in the other analysis; the latter preponderates enormously. Indeed, this is the direction in which abstract art has tended to develop ever since the Renaissance. The tendency became more and more pronounced, in proportion as the Germanic nations, with their infinitely younger culture and their introspective genius, turned to the practice of art, while the Latins remained more faithful to the purely sensuous ideal. The results were two traditions: the one relatively artistic, the other relatively literary. The former is, of course, the only essential one from our standpoint. We shall therefore have to concern ourselves especially with this, in order to find points of contact with other æsthetic interests.

Its capital, its principal dwelling, we may say, is at present Paris.

This fact is not to be gainsaid by patriotic feeling. It seems to us a regrettable one, not only because it gives an advantage to our hereditary foe, but because we should deplore such a concentration anywhere, as showing that even art has succumbed to the modern mania for centralisation.

It will be well to circumscribe our meaning here.

Of course, it is not suggested that Paris is the only centre of painting or sculpture. It is simply a question of manner. I believe that German painting, as manifested in Thoma, Böcklin, Lenbach, &c., or English painting, as practised, for instance, by the Pre-Raphaelites, is less capable of expansion, of a wide, universal artistic development than that of Paris; when I say "of Paris," I include in the term many distinguished aliens, who, after studying in Paris, have carried the tendencies of French art back with them to their native lands, extending and nationalising them.

For directly we consider German, or English, or Scandinavian painting purely from the pictorial standpoint, we do it injustice. We would fain determine what is modern, *i.e.*, serviceable to the age. How can we do this with painting specifically German, English, Danish, &c.?

It is not only that the material analysed by many artists of these nationalities is remote and has no affinity with the era of railways and of countless other things that give it an aspect so different to that of its predecessors; the manner of analysis might harmonise this or at least avoid glaring discords. But it is just their manner of analysing that is so foreign to us. There is much originality in the process, it is true; but it is the same manner, modified by individuals, with which the ancestors of these artists achieved identical results with the greatest success several hundred years ago. We know that such and such a picture was not painted centuries ago, solely by reason of certain externals familiar to all students of art history; no intrinsic tokens make it certain that it could only have been painted in our own day. This art is not the necessary consequence of weighty contemporary elements, something self-evident and belonging to the age, but rather something opposed to it. We might almost say that it was not created by the age, but in spite of it.

We know, of course, that there are affinities between modern artists and their remotest ancestors—that there are moderns who have succeeded in avoiding these incongruities, though painting the same things as the old masters. It is just the greatest art of all ages that shows these affinities, nay more, that lives by them. There is nothing more economic than the power that augments the artistic wealth of the world. Like the organic forces of Nature, it works by fertilisation. If the stages of development are more obscure here than in Nature, the aim, the strenuous impulse towards purposeful efficiency, is identical in both.

We shall try in the sequel to discover certain fundamental æsthetic elements of ancient art, in order to see where we have gained, where lost, and how it has all happened. We do not propose to do this by the process of art-history; this would be to repeat an oft-told tale. We shall only linger at one or the other of the stages of this development, notably, at one of the earliest, because it offers the strongest possible contrast to our latest, and because, in spite of this, there are bold dreamers who would bind the two ends together. Whether this is possible is still an open question. At any rate, we will consider them both with this possibility in view.

THE RISE OF PAINTING

The Christian Church undoubtedly rendered immortal service to art. Her artistic influence began at the moment when the Roman Empire lay in its last throes. Her radical principle, to make everything as unlike as possible to the creations of Rome, enabled her from the first to dictate the course of art to some extent. The æsthetic standpoint was naturally somewhat overlooked in the programme. In the beginning the church was as barbarous as Protestantism. Art was idolatry, and for the Christian, this idolatry was embodied in sculpture, the presentment of heathen divinity, which was accordingly forbidden once for all. Not until Christian Radicalism had been softened by the lapse of a thousand years, did men begin to think more indulgently. But sculpture never quite recovered from the effects of this neglect, and its development as an abstract art was therefore tardier than that of painting. It remained architectonic to the time of our grandfathers.

All that had pertained to it in pre-Christian times among all nations, became the property of painting. The aims of the two arts were by no means identical. Painting was writing, a medium of communication for the primitive purposes of the church. It did not become art, till thought found leisure to express itself in images, and growing wealth led to the decoration of the churches.

Hence it was originally stroke, line, linear signs. Its development was the development of line.

And at the same time its history may be carried back to a history of the supersession of line by plane. All that was taken from the one was added to the other. The relation between the two is the physiological point of the whole history.

Line was the handwriting of style. It rises from the coarsest ornament to the highest expressive power, and becomes the vehicle of the mightiest and most comprehensive of traditions, the Gothic. As it declines, tradition declines with it, and individuality gains the ascendency. Then it takes refuge in planes, which become of supreme importance in our modern, purely abstract art.

MOSAICS

The first stage included mosaics. Planes as yet had no existence for the artist, they were the affair of the craftsman. Contour alone was the vehicle of the formula, and the formula was anonymous, not the work of individuals, but a legacy.

It is difficult, to a certain extent, to imagine the creative act that produced these early mosaics. There was no art, but there was certainly an instinct for interior-effects, the vastness, loftiness, and grace of which fill us with amazement. Who will find words in our copious art-dictionaries to describe the absolutely divine emotion that thrills the quiet tourist in a mosaic interior like that

of the Baptistery of the Orthodox Church at Ravenna? Who could suggest the splendour of the gem-like purples, the rhythmic harmony of the simple, earnest faces of the Apostles? Where may we dream more sweetly of the lovely legends of our faith, than in the chapel of Galla Placidia, before the artless poetry of the representation of the Good Shepherd? What can be more magnificent than San Vitale? We are dazzled at the mere thought of what this building must once have been. Wherever, wandering in search of the highest enjoyments, we light on old mosaics, be it in Rome, Sicily, or Constantinople, there comes a moment when we feel more or less definitely as if in comparison to these first written characters of our art, all that has followed had been mere confusion. Is there not something of the same feeling in our attitude to the architectonic form, which bears so many of these characters? The Romanesque style has never been surpassed in grandeur; to our generation it seems the sole basis for a modern architecture.

The Byzantines were the first to bring mosaic decoration to perfection. Modern research, blind to all but the analytical development of art, is inclined to neglect their work altogether, insisting much on the beauty and nobility of Early Christian examples, and treating the Byzantine more or less as barbaric aberrations. This attitude is a remnant of that famous classic tendency, which while it preserved painting and sculpture, perverted the development of architecture, and was not so far overcome as to allow us to look for beauty outside Greece and Rome till our own times. The greatest and most rational achievement in modern æsthetics, the rehabilitation of Gothic and Romanesque art, cannot ignore the Byzantine form; least of all can it do so in favour of that last and somewhat puerile remnant of the Roman tradition, which the early Christians of necessity carried into our era.

In one point only were these earlier mosaic-workers superior to the Byzantines: in colour. Even here the superiority is not quite indisputable; for the reticent colour of the Byzantines undoubtedly served the architectonic ideal to perfection. On the other hand, the Byzantines excelled in drawing, if we judge their work rationally, and not with the unnatural determination to divorce it from architecture and consider it as a thing apart. It is absolutely appropriate to the technique. Wherever the Early Christian mosaics, influenced by the antique, or the later mosaics, betray that feeling for nature afterwards developed in painting, the decorative effect is sensibly diminished. The problem of equilibrium as between the requirements of nature and style, which antiquity alone has been able to solve to the satisfaction of both, began here. Directly realism appeared in the mosaics, the magical effect of the technique disappeared.

Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in S. Mark's at Venice, to whose vast series of mosaics every century has contributed, from the tenth to our own; in other words, the whole of that Christian era with which we are dealing. To the Byzantine conception, persons and things, and all that was represented, were merely vehicles for decorative line, hardly more than those exquisite letters that accompany the pictures, and are more essential for the comprehension of the picture than the subject-matter itself. The modern mosaics take a middle course, and aim chiefly at attracting as strongly as possible. The compositions on the façade are gaudy pictures, in which the space they occupy means only the measure of their extent, and is otherwise a matter of no importance. They serve merely to make the extraordinarily animated façade more restless still, and they attempt to compete with the architecture, instead of to harmonise with it. They

do, perhaps, succeed in putting their rival into the shade, but only by destroying the artistic harmony of the whole. We note a difference at once as we pass into the atrium. Here the Byzantine ideal predominates. We get some prescience of the splendour within, but, in accordance with the old methods, it is only a prescience. It is architecture covered with signs. These signs are unmeaning, if we examine them in detail as we should examine a picture; their conventionality of composition, the very primitive ideas they symbolise, make them incomprehensible to the modern. The architecture alone gives them æsthetic value. One of the arches depicts the story of Noah. The various episodes of the legend are set forth in sections at certain intervals; each is a decoration in itself. We see figures, animals, waves, but what impresses us above all, is the extraordinary correlation of these lines and the planes they surround; the lines are placed with such unerring judgment, that we never for a moment ask ourselves what they mean. The subject-matter is so subordinated to them, that we do not even think of protesting against this subordination. Captivated by the purely decorative charm of these signs, we finally come to accept the complex emotions they demand from the understanding. The psychology of religious suggestion finds rich material here.

The six-winged angels between the arches of the right-hand cupola in the atrium are magnificent pieces of decoration. Their wings stream out in the three directions of the pendentives assigned to them; it is scarcely possible to imagine anything more architectonic, more absolutely appropriate to a given space. They are a perfect translation into planes of the grandiose sculptures of the capitals, with their lions and peacocks, that uphold the arches. The modern mosaic of the sixteenth century in the central cupola seems timid indeed in comparison. The Evangelists are seated on clouds on either side of the enclosing triumphal arch. They reveal all the mediocrity of the epigoni. If the naturalism with which they are treated were carried very much further, the theme would seem none the less unnatural to the spectator. As it is impossible to sit upon clouds, the more realistically such a suggestion is made, the less credible it appears. The representation of the Apostles as life-size figures, lacking all architectonic proportion to the magnificent arch, is positively murderous in its unskilfulness. Early Christian buildings of some 1000 years earlier show what can be done with such arches in mosaic without any ornament. I may cite the triumphal arch of Sant' Apollinare in Classe, near Ravenna, the mosaics of which date from the sixth century.

In the interior of St. Mark's criticism is dumb; so, too, is what we call artistic perception. We no longer deliberate; the hand that holds the guide-book closes convulsively, and the brain abjures its deadly waste of time and thinks no more. We can form no idea of such splendour till we see it, and then we seem to be in the presence of something abnormal, impossible, gigantic, terrible. We do not see this golden magnificence—we hear it, feel it, and breathe it. In an instant, a new sense is created—a sense of space. We cease to be individuals, and become atoms, silent particles among other such.

What do we moderns with our æsthetic trivialities know of such grandeur! If we could fill a room with the finest pictures of our century, if we could collect all that is greatest in Italian and in Northern art in a single gallery, it would remain a gallery, a space devoted to art, something isolated and remote that could never intoxicate the soul as do this barbaric gold and these barbaric symbols of the discredited Byzantines. It may be objected that it is the depth, and not the

extent, of the emotion produced that is of moment. . . . I can imagine heretics who would call this depth weakness, who are brutal enough to prefer the blind impact of such barbarism as this to the solvent knowledge of culture. . . . It may certainly make some among us forget our analysis for a moment, and lose our critical bearings, so to speak. But what would we not give, if such emotion sometimes overcame us in the presence of modern decoration!

Here the art of mosaic shows its strength; it was created for these galleries, for these arches and cupolas. It works miracles here with the dusky gleam of its gold in the quiet chapels, in this inimitable interior, with the magic glimpses between and above the pillars. There is not a single picture in the church, yet none seems richer in pictures. I am not thinking now of those created by the mosaic-workers, but of those produced as one catches sight of the mosaics through the architecture. pictures that change with every step, with every gleam of light, and are absolutely inexhaustible. Whereas in the atrium the Byzantine decoration appears as the discreet handmaid of architecture, here it is the privileged companion, or indeed the crown of the whole, the speech, the vivifying element of the divine body.

The wealth of this language is extraordinary. It ranges from the loftiest majesty to the most child-like simplicity, from awe-inspiring gloom to smiling sweetness. Below the large modern, ineffective compositions in the two side-aisles, there are on each side five isolated figures, among them, on the left, a youthful Christ, and on the same place, on the right, a youthful Virgin. It is impossible to imagine anything more delicious than these two faces. The fair-haired, aristocratic Christ has a sweetness of expression only to be found in Vivarini's most delicate works, and the Mary with the dark hair and eyes, and the tender lines, might also be by the hand of the great master of Murano. With this graceful loveliness we may contrast the tremendous vigour and dignity of the mosaics over the high altar: the symbols of the Evangelists in the pendentives that divide the cupola of the apse from that of the high altar, and especially that terrific lion, in the creation of which convention has only been used to emphasise the grimness of the beast, who appears as the concentrated expression of all the gloomy majesty that slumbers in the architecture. The bold suppliant who dared to raise his eyes from the ground must have started, as if a glare of lightning had met his gaze, when he saw this monster high above him, and have bowed his neck again meekly, to carry the burden of inarticulate prayer.

In the exquisite chapel of St. Clemente close by we enter into another atmosphere, one of gentle mysticism. A brooding twilight fills the space. The marble rises in gray majesty from the ground. At the spring of the vault the mosaic begins, and shows the solitary figure of the saint in the lunette. Can one ever forget the twilight behind the pillars, through which the bronze lamps gleam, the solemn altar with its shimmer of marble reliefs, the calm saint above? Over this again the eye is carried through vast arches to the upper storey, to the recurrent glimmer of gold and holy sign, and finally rests high above in the vault, on the swaying ship with the Apostles and the fantastic white sail.

It is curious that the most "modern" of spectators feels no inclination to smile at the naïve audacity of certain of these conceptions. And as he has learnt to dissociate religion from art, and prides himself on having lost his reverence for an outworn creed, it can only be æsthetic appreciation that makes him accept the extreme manifestations of this much maligned style. These are plentiful enough.

A favourite motive in various places, which recurs in St. Mark's, is Christ leading the faithful to bliss over the prostrate Satan. This group so teems with grotesque defects of drawing, that in any other connection it would suggest caricature. But here our critical judgment is suspended. Each detail carries on the eye to the next, and bids us grasp the whole. And this gives life to the creation. It is, of course, a very different life from that of the modern picture. Measured by this, it may seem a dead letter, but, on the other hand, the modern work would be dead if applied as it is applied. It is a part of the place that stirs such strange exaltation in the spectator; these symbols were made for this place, and for it alone. A time came, when men looked upon those mathematical laws which the Byzantines consciously or unconsciously observed as sheer barbarism, and judged it unworthy of the soul to be guided by logic. As if there could be anything more venerable than these eternal mathematical truths! As a fact, the eye still finds harmonies in these half geometrical pictures, unique creations that evoke unique emotions. In the very group I have just mentioned, there is such a mighty sense of movement, the action of the advancing Saviour, his mournful face turned to the suppliants, the cross held high in his hand, is so convincing, that one is carried away and accepts the grotesque as a matter of course. Consider similar subjects as treated later by the primitive painters: Fra Angelico's *Last Judgment*, where the angels pace the gardens of Paradise on the right, while sinners are larded, boiled, and roasted on the left. These inevitably strike us as comical, because here mathematics have given place to spiritual sentimentality. Of course, Fra Angelico's conception, a symptom of that milder ideal of Christianity that followed the phase of rigid asceticism, indicates a general advance in culture. But this synchronised with a diminution of suggestive power, an enfeeblement of the forces at the disposal of the Church. The difference is very apparent, even in St. Mark's itself. Wherever we find the work of later centuries, more especially of those when painting was at its apogee, the technical effect is lost. It is lamentable indeed that the most important feature of all, the enthroned Christ of the apsidal cupola, should not be in the pure style. In domed spaces such as this, Byzantine mosaic developed a grandeur truly stupendous. I know nothing more beautiful of the kind than the fragments preserved in the churches of Murano and Torcello, the venerable dependencies of the city of the lagoons.

The ancient mosaic pavement of San Donato at Murano is in itself worth a visit to the melancholy spot. The design is exquisite, geometrical yet arbitrary. Time, working like a mole under the slabs, has made it more arbitrary still. One feels inclined to lie down on the ground, on this strange, Oriental carpet of stone.

Then suddenly, almost casually, one sees far beyond, the gigantic golden apse, and alone therein, a single slender figure, in flowing blue draperies: Our Lady as Intercessor. It does not seem to be a dome in which she is hovering, but a world, and the pale creature floats in the terrible world-solitude, holding her hands up before her face, as if rigid with the burden of her enigmatic prayers. In all our religion there is no grander, deeper mystery, and nowhere has it been more grandly and deeply treated than here. The mosaics in the apse at Torcello have the same vigorous intensity. Here the Virgin supports the Infant Christ, as in the chapel of San Zeno at St. Mark's. Below, and separated from her by a banderole, the exquisite lettering of which has the effect of the finest ornament, the twelve Apostles stand in a flowery meadow, and beneath them the splendid gray marble with its almost geometrical zigzag veinings, descends to the

choir-stalls, which rise in tiers, and fill the hemicycle of the choir as in an antique theatre. The artistic effect is indescribable. Everything is so arranged as to bring the principal figure into relief. Proportions and colours are gradually strengthened to this end. The Apostles are treated in subdued tones; white predominates in their draperies, while the slender figure of the Virgin, clad in the traditional deep blue robe, stands out from the golden background, her hands and face being the only passages of light colour. The most beautiful ornament would not be so effective as this simple contrast, the sharp contour against the grandiose gold background, to which an automatic play of light and shade gives a gentle animation. The Apostles all stand facing the spectator on a straight strip of meadow, studded with exquisitely treated conventional flowers. Their draperies are caught back in such a manner that each overhanging hem forms almost identical angles, and this gives throughout the row a scarcely perceptible, yet indispensable undulation to the outline, which contrasts pleasantly with the perpendicular figures. The meadow with the Apostles is enframed in a beautifully designed border, simpler and more tasteful than the similar border in the apse of St. Mark's.

If we picture to ourselves the cathedral of Torcello, decorated with the same mosaic as the magnificent façade, with its pavement, and its internal architecture, of which certain marvellous fragments still remain, notably on the rood-screen, we shall not lightly judge an art that was lost for ever, yet never replaced. What is it to us that it was practised by slaves, and that its radiant structures rose upon necks bowed beneath the yoke? The Church, the element that generated this art, has fallen from her high estate, and as we linger in the palaces of her departed glory, we venerate, not her, but the art she called into being. The greatness she created she herself caused to decay. The association of art with religion was as propitious to this great decorative art in its beginning as it was disastrous towards its close. The more the Church drifted from her supernatural sense of supreme aloofness, the more languid became that great decorative impetus which made the house of God a new world, expressing, not only the genius of one man, however great, but the fervour of nations and peoples.

Art has become free; it has thrown off, not only the bondage of the Church, but that of all subsequent elements which have attempted more or less successfully to take the place of the religious impulse. To-day art is as essentially the work of the individual, as it was formerly that of thousands. It has altered so radically, that the name it once bore is scarcely applicable now. Between the new and the old lies the gulf that separates the individual and the mass. These are distinct conceptions, that no art history can weld together.

GIOTTO: DETAIL OF A FRESCO

IN THE CHAPEL OF THE MADONNA DELL'ARENA IN PADUA

FROM THE GOTHIC PERIOD TO THE RENAISSANCE

The first step was the transition from mosaic to fresco. It was decisive. The artist himself became the decorator, and undertook the expression of his thoughts; in his hands thought necessarily underwent a corresponding change.

The rapidity with which the decorative ideals of the mosaicists disappeared is remarkable. In his mosaics, as in his gigantic Madonna-pictures, Cimabue still shows the decorative grandeur of an art directed to the ornamentation of vast interiors. In Giotto's hands, painting is already pictorial.

The example that will best illustrate our present thesis is perhaps Giotto's beautiful and harmonious fresco-series in the Chapel of the Arena at Padua. This work contains the germ of all that later art has laboriously achieved. In such details as that of the traitor's kiss, with its antithesis of the brutal plebeian head of the renegade and the divine face whose eyes seem to pierce the sinner's soul, we are startled by a manifestation of personal conceptions, a deeply dramatic power, worlds apart from Byzantine ideals. But all such effects are isolated. Let us examine the general effect produced by this little interior, which might have been decoratively treated by the simplest methods, and let us remember our first sight of it on entering, before we had found out the pearls among all these timid lines and tints. Did we not feel a desire to turn back at once into the blooming garden about the little house? Did we not conquer a certain involuntary repulsion by a more or less archæological interest before we could venture nearer? Then, indeed, after getting at the root of the matter, we possibly went to another uncritical extreme, and looked upon the desire for strong impressions which was disappointed at our entrance, as the impulse of a barbarian. In unsophisticated minds, memory will always retain the twin impressions: the delight in personal elements, which we find here in such imperishable traits, in spite of all ravages, and the yearning for architectonic effects, which was so painfully repulsed.

The Chapel of the Arena was the first picture-gallery: it is the starting-point of what I may call the gallery-characteristics of all our art. The picture has already become something we must look at alone, divorced from its surroundings and governed by its own laws. Art no longer bases itself on the cosmos, but the individual becomes his own cosmos, a world within the other. The very first step of this art was momentous for the decorative ideal. Note the *Last Judgment* on the façade of the chapel. The composition—not, of course, by Giotto himself—is as weak as the conception that inspired it, and led on to Fra Angelico's versions of the same subject.

Meanwhile, as the land, struggling against disaster, allowed art to become painting, incapable of creating anything but pictures, a marvellous structure was growing up in the barbaric north, the home of the new church. It could not have arisen in Italy, where, in spite of all intellectual reactions, the mighty works of antiquity held the senses spell-bound. The ancient Roman civilisation was not merely a pagan civilisation; it was above all things Italian, a part of the national being, and the greatest, most idealistic artistic expression of that being. The fact that certain ideas had changed under alien influences, could not suddenly drive the blood of the nation into different channels, any more than it could alter their faces and racial peculiarities. The growths of the Italian soil could not be anything but Roman.

On the other hand, there was nothing in the north that was calculated to check an artistic development of ecclesiastical form. The part assumed by Christianity here was different from that played by the obsolete pagan culture of Italy. It took the form of a revelation, throwing light into the minds of the barbarians, still shrouded in the mists of dawn. A robust people, which had lived hitherto by its own rough strength, encountered Christianity just when its power had manifested itself sufficiently in externals to allow of further development on spiritual lines. The material function of Christianity was at once favourably regarded by the leading spirits, who valued material enlightenment. To them the intellectual advantages offered by Christianity sufficed to make the whole scheme acceptable. And the new doctrine carried out this mission with unexampled circumspection, disseminating practical knowledge, and sciences, with no premonition that the very culture whose foundations it was laying would finally outgrow it, as the last consequence of its work. Thus art, which served it, grew in its hands to something intellectual, not merely suggestive of thought, but itself a fruit of thought. Popular decorative elements blended with what religion had brought, but the distinctive element was a new one, resting on a basis of keen reflection, and thus sharply differentiated from all Roman art. It found its fullest expression in the French architecture of the thirteenth century, known as Gothic architecture. Consciously, and with a science whose healthy influence has worked beneficently even in our own day upon our decadent architecture, a system of construction was evolved that was logical before it became beautiful. The consequences were stupendous; the system found its way into Italy and there accomplished the unimaginable, the subjection of the Italians to the barbarians, and their docile acceptance of that Gothic style, which was antagonistic to all the inherited instincts of the nation.

The audacities of this architecture reduced the solid wall-surfaces to a minimum. There was no room for mosaic. Its place was taken by painted glass, the Hosanna of Gothic art, which found its counterpart in the noble music that swelled upwards to the lofty windows.

Let us compare the Paduan picture-gallery with the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris, that little miracle of glass-painting, where the coloured windows (which are far from being the most beautiful specimens of this Gothic art) constitute the sole decoration and complete the seductive harmony of the place. It seems incomprehensible that we should have given up the one thing—this splendid unity—to nurture the other—the art that Giotto inaugurated.

It was, nevertheless, inevitable. The tremendous forces of Gothic art were bound to prove self-destructive in the end. The same power that soared heavenward in its magnificent buildings, forced every activity upwards, into a sphere where at last there was no possibility of co-operation. In Italy, under Giotto, the pupil of the mosaicist Cimabue, the style became type, a similarity of faces and movements, within the limits of which the individuality of Giotto's pupils could only find expression in delicate inflections. But simultaneously, painting became independent of the wall. The wooden panel grew out of the fresco, and this evolution was the external preparation for the complete isolation of painting. A circumstance that contributed greatly to this result, was that the execution of these pictures was entrusted to the same artists who illuminated the books used in the services of the church. The didactic purpose of the books usurped predominance in the pictures. The ornamentation of the missals, admirably and

intelligently applied as such, with a perfect comprehension of the surfaces to be decorated, and of the relation between pictures and text, was stripped of its original function in a picture, and found no new, clearly defined vocation to replace it. The artist arranged and enlarged what he had painted in little on the vellum; the superficial relation to architecture which passed into the picture in the process, came circuitously through the book; this, of course, had certain decorative elements in common with the structural style. The literary experiments of painting are of great antiquity.

Thus was evolved the picture, a composition governed, not by the law of the place that contained it, but by that of a more or less arbitrary frame. This frame still stands in the appointed Holy of Holies, but it is already an independent thing, a church within the church, a place in which is worth the effort of the noblest.

And now the North begins to invade this place too. A school of painting sprang up in Cologne, which expressed the very essence of Gothic art in its altar-pieces. These have none of the minuteness of the illuminators; their unknown authors were rather stone-masons, penetrated by the ideas of form that governed Northern carving, and seeking to express these anew in pictures. They could not arrest the tragedy of the problem; their dawning glory heralded the downfall of the building, but they rescued what was most precious therein, preserving it to inspire after-generations to renewed creative effort.

From these germs the first genius of the new art, Jan van Eyck, arose a century after Giotto. He gave to painting something universal and all-embracing, elements of such grandeur and nobility that we acquiesce in the ruin of all else, to ensure the survival of this one thing.

With him the material functions of pictorial art changed once more. The planes become more and more significant; an amazing minuteness of detail reinforces the particular interest of the theme. Such miniature-painting as Van Eyck accomplished in his *Virgin in the Temple* of the Basle Museum, or his *Vierge au Donateur* in the Louvre, especially in the exquisitely elaborate background, differed entirely from the work of the mediæval illuminators, and was hardly ever achieved by the specialists of a later date. Simultaneously Fra Angelico painted the little altar-tabernacles now shown in the monastery of St. Mark's, the minute golden lattice-work with the Virgin behind, works of art full of the pathetic patience only possible in a monk. Compare Fouquet's miniatures at Chantilly with Fra Angelico's. There is nothing minute in the work of the Northern miniaturist, and certainly no sweetness. The eye is delighted by the detail here also, but this disappears in the general effect. Van Eyck's art is the sagest application of architectonic laws. In his hands, a brush and pigments accomplish what only structural art had hitherto achieved.

Technically also, Van Eyck's methods were new. He invented painting with oils, the medium that caused a revolution, the only medium in which the mighty achievements of the future art were possible, the medium which ensured them an immortality they could not have enjoyed in the form of frescoes.

With the rise of this art, the organic nature of general artistic development ceased. The grouping of artists into Schools was the last remnant of the superficial homogeneity of individuals. It disappeared gradually under the growing worship of personality. The subsequent development necessarily takes on a spasmodic character, the accidental, experimental nature of isolated effort. Italy produced no parallel to the art of Van Eyck, wealthy though it had become again, and

fascinating as was the bloom of Fra Angelico's colour. In the North the monk had become a schoolmaster; here in Italy he remained an artist, until Donatello's generation. His work was both pious and charming, and an admirable decoration for vellum or parchment. But when he made use of large panels, it overflowed with a sugary sweetness that trickled into the art of his successors. Van Eyck is a man beside a doll in comparison; we need hardly invoke the Adam and Eve of the Ghent altar-piece to illustrate this.

The union of the Italian and Northern Primitives was the happiest of artistic marriages, but the North was the man. There was no danger of loss for the North, but it was different for the other partner. Once more a mighty song swelled across the Alps, the pæan of the Van Eycks, of Van der Goes and Roger van der Weyden; once more a barbarian conquest was imminent, and this time a final decision was involved.

But meanwhile Italy had recovered her senses, and had become a rich and powerful country. Her artistic energy had certainly not spent itself in the devout litanies of the monk of San Marco. One day artists who wore no cowls discovered remains of classic sculptures beneath their native soil. In a flash they recognised how they might shake off the foreign domination, and cleanse the house from all traces of the barbarians. The tremendous prestige of classic art unfurled its phœnix wings. No one troubled himself now about the moral import of this art. The Church had become omnipotent, and could venture upon anything. She stood exalted above the petty party-rage of her infancy: a gracious woman, fair and crowned, who loved courtly splendour, and understood the æsthetic value of those relics of her long-since-perished heathen predecessor which she had once looked upon with such abhorrence.

As the final act of her artistic career, Italy essayed the happy experiment of the Renaissance, with stupendous results; after a struggle of a century she conquered Gothic, and brought the barbarians to her feet. The Renaissance became the style of all Europe.

The spectacle is a familiar one. But we have perhaps rather overlooked its tragic side, and in the fulness of delights showered upon us by the Renaissance, have forgotten what it took from us. The battle of its great leaders is bound up with such important deeds and is so rich in wondrous elements that we forget that what they gave us at last was a many-headed hydra. Our artistic appreciation is coloured by our recognition of the immense advance in culture, the real struggle for real ends, which heralded our new era, and was so richly adorned by art. But in the domain of art the course of victory was not pursued in the normal direction of general culture, as the result of battles already won. On the contrary, it gave up positions already taken, and lost them irretrievably. It was natural that radical changes in social and economic conditions should seek expression in art. As no fitting expression was to be found through the medium of Gothic art, there was a sudden retrogression to a world of forms which lacked the sound basis of this art—a determination to meet natural requirements—and admitted of artistic but not of logical application. Art became more natural, by using the freer forms of the ancients, but at the same time, it verged on the unreal, for the age had no inevitable necessity for these forms. It would be futile to attempt a critical comparison between Gothic and Renaissance; the Renaissance manner was not, strictly speaking, a style at all; there has, in fact, been no style since the Gothic.

From this standpoint, the significance of which is more and more apparent

VAN EYCK: JAN ARNOLFINI AND HIS WIFE

NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

to us, the heirs of that epoch, the Renaissance in architecture was no revival, but a brilliant decline. Its essential element is of a negative and dissolvent kind, an experiment that necessarily brought about decentralisation, the primary essential for the development of painting. At one ideal moment we find all the artistic forces assembled. It is the prologue, the freshest, most enthralling act of the whole drama. Masaccio's gravity becomes the boldest poetry in his eager, gifted pupils. This poetry, to which Filippo Lippi, Botticelli and Ghirlandajo contributed their loveliest rhythms, disclosed the sweetest blossom of Italian art; its virgin charm is eternal. The vernal freshness that characterised it, its hopefulness, its thirst for action so enchant us, that we feel a certain disappointment at the consummation offered us by its more mature successor.

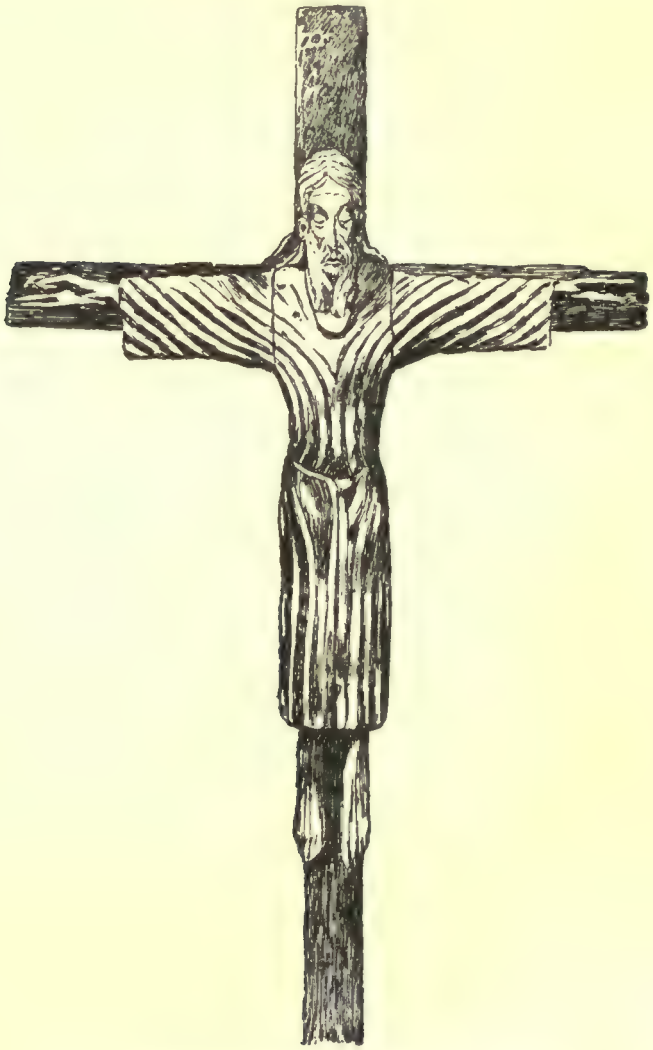
The prologue is like a meeting of the hunt: the sportsmen are all together, but they are waiting eagerly for the signal that will scatter them to the four winds. They are held together only by influences, and these influences unite the arts. Donatello inspires the painters, and the painters are further architects, goldsmiths, and many other things, but they are so individually, accidentally, as a result of their passionate desire for action, their lofty wish to make everything share their enthusiasm. They take part in industry. But their influence is of no permanent benefit to industry. What do they, in their exuberant energy, know of that use and purpose, without which industry pines away? And while they carry their art unto these mainfold activities, they over-refine in detail, and give an active impulse to that decadence in general art, which their forefathers passively promoted.

It is characteristic of our age, that contemporary artists are mainly concerned with the resuscitation of the Renaissance ideal, and that so many of the artists who have the renewal of general art at heart, are haunted by that epoch, on which, by a pious fraud, they foist the tendency they desire to promote to-day. We cannot demand of the last heirs of that development, which made individuality the highest good, that they should go back to a period when the individual was non-existent. They take the moment when the ideal of a general style was still alive, though various powerful personalities were at work. But they overlook the logical weakness of the moment, the fact that the qualities which distinguished these persons necessarily brought about the disintegration, the evils of which we are now enduring.

An Italian, the latest and greatest, made a final effort to combine the two ideals, to offer the highest that individual art could give, and to unite all the arts to beautify an interior. This was the dream of Michelangelo!

But this giant's life-work served only to bring the tragedy of modern art to a climax. He, the purest, most abstract artist that ever lived, attempted to accomplish what can never be combined with the abstract. The fact that his noble frescoes in the Sistine Chapel can only be seen by a dislocation of our limbs, and that we have to examine them in photographs in order to enjoy them, suffices to condemn them from the architectonic point of view. There is unquestionably more genius in the finger of God, calling Adam to life, than in the whole work of any of Michelangelo's forerunners; but the secondary purpose he, the master of all arts, bound up with his art, he never accomplished, because it was impossible for him to avoid the natural consequences of his brilliant gifts. And therefore the decorative effect of his magnificent ceiling is monstrous, just as, in spite of the beauty of the marble figures on the Medici tombs at Florence, the ensemble of limbs and the stones on which they rest, *i.e.*, the sarcophagi as such, are monstrous. The objection, that powers far inferior to his would have sufficed to achieve harmony,

is unmeaning, and quite beside the question. If, in our quest for a certain good, we light on another far greater, the fact that we have not found what we set out to look for remains unchanged. Michelangelo was conscious of the tragedy. The number of unfinished works he left prove how greatly he feared to forget the result in the process. He became the bane of the epigoni, who took what could not satisfy him, and made it a definite formula, from which they evolved the sinister beauty of the Baroque Style—the beginning of the end of European architecture.



WOODEN CRUCIFIX IN BRUNSWICK CATHEDRAL

TINTORETTO: MARTYRDOM OF ST. MARK

BRUSSELS MUSEUM

THE FIRST FLORESCENCE OF PAINTING

The victorious struggle of planes against line continued with results more and more decisive in the new painting. The Venetians, Rubens, Rembrandt and Velazquez were its heroes. In the nineteenth century this tendency was carried to its extreme consequence. The result is undoubtedly the most important acquisition made by our art. If it were the only one, and if the influence on all æsthetic production had been limited to it alone, its apogee would coincide with the nadir of our power to form style.

This conclusion, a consequence of the Renaissance idea, is happily an error. We shall see later, on which factors the formation of style devolves in our times, at least, in our abstract art. To deduce the style of our day from our pictures would be as absurd as to deduce Gothic art from Gothic pictures. Painting did not create Gothic. The reverse was rather the case. Painting needed the impetus it received from contemporary style, to free itself from that style. Its destinies can therefore at the most only be accounted symptoms of this liberation, this "degothicisation," if I may coin such a word.

On the other hand, the period undoubtedly plays a part in another form in the development of painting, however spasmodic this may seem. Its course may, to a certain extent, be recognised as a phenomenon parallel with the development of the human organ of vision and certain faculties of perception, not in its entirety, but certainly in its most important tendency. The great painters, to whom we owe landscape, from the Dutchmen of the seventeenth century to our own contemporaries, were undoubtedly right, when they showed that there are other things to see in Nature besides the stylistic line which classicism selected. Our own century played such an important part in the development of landscape, that we may almost consider the creation of the genre as an achievement of our era alone. The importance of light, of air, of all the imponderabilia we require to give probability to a study of nature, developed gradually, almost step by step. Much that the earlier masters saw in Nature, seems, if we place the most trivial modern landscape beside it, an illusion of primitive senses, and it seems legitimate to demand that the increased complexity of our perceptions should find expression in art as well as elsewhere. This necessary scientific accretion, which nevertheless may leave to art all its sources of beauty or even create new ones for it, modifies its technical equipment. The significance of the artistic is unaffected by this modification; painting governed by scientific considerations alone would lose its artistic value. Science must remain a means, and can never become an end in this connection.

The quasi-material development of painting naturally caused a reaction on the other side. While interest in Nature became more and more intimate, composition entered upon a new phase. Its field of operation altered, became smaller both in a superficial and a literary sense. The Dutchmen of Rembrandt's time had already demonstrated that, to render the quality of a fine piece of stuff, it is not necessary to drape it on an elegantly posed figure, nay more, that arrangement

of the drapery is just as unnecessary as the elegant pose; a Vermeer showed the perfection of art that may lie in the picturesque reproduction of the stuff alone, and how things so unpretentious from the literary point of view may afford far more enjoyment than the huge compositions manufactured in Rubens' workshop.

There was composition, too, of course, in the Vermeer; without it the artist's gift would not have produced its full effect. But it was not of the lofty classic kind. It concealed itself behind an apparent simplicity of form that suggested mere fidelity to the thing seen. It did not make the arrangement of the picture dependent on the literary argument, but treated it to all appearance quite arbitrarily, though in reality with the most delicate sense of the division of space, which made the illusion of accident an artistic means no less powerful than grandiose composition.

What I call grandiose composition here, in order to make myself easily understood, is deliberately constructive painting, which still retains a certain connection with the conventions of antique style, and finds the stately character it desires more especially in reliance upon classical forms.

The definite linear outline was originally the logical organ of this art. The great typical pictures of the Venetians made the first step towards that use of colour which destroys line, and in a still greater degree is this true of Rubens, who practically abolished line. It is remarkable that among the immense series of his gigantic pictures the two that deserve the place of honour are the magnificent unfinished works in the Uffizi, the *Battle of Ivry*, and *Henry IV.'s Entry into Paris*, works consisting mainly of splashes of colour, in which we divine more than we see, and in which not drawing, but a vigorously wielded brush triumphs. They are far more valuable than the long array of finished flesh-constructions that cover the walls at Vienna, Dresden, Munich and Paris, because they contain to a marvellous degree what Rubens could do, and because his faculty is closely akin to that of the best among our own masters.

The shadow of this personality hangs over the whole of modern art. Rubens stands in his small Flanders like a colossal tree, so firmly rooted and so great that in the three hundred years of his still unchecked growth his boughs have spread over all the little land.

Two strong branches dominate among the rest. One, the larger of the two, stretches out to France. On it, not far from the parent-stem, are perched a couple of lovers in Watteau costume; farther on is Delacroix. Then the stem makes a mighty knot, and divides into many twigs, on which the buds are only just beginning to burst; they gleam with the colours of modern French art. The other branch rises, slim and tender, with but little side-growth, northwards to England; this was grafted by Van Dyck. It was not so vigorous and natural as the other, with whose foliage its own often mingled; it did not develop in the open air to which the other aspired, but flourished in the lofty sphere of English Court life. It first overshadowed the pale aristocrats that Rubens' pupil painted at the Court of Charles I., and then the more natural and not less stately splendour of Gainsborough and Reynolds.

The law which governs the historical development of powers such as that represented by Rubens is a secret one, mysterious as Nature and comparable to Nature in its noiseless workings. If we go further back, we shall recognise in Rubens the fusion of northern and southern elements, which, before him, first met at the time of Van Eyck. When the pictorial impulse of Italy was in its

RUBENS: THE LION HUNT

HERMITAGE, ST. PETERSBURG

first phase, the North approached her. Venice, in particular, was the scene of the encounter; here Van Eyck's pupil, Antonello, taught the new creed, and gave the new school so much of his own strenuous individuality that all Italy subsisted on it for generations, and the first great painter of the Venetian school, Bellini, is like a Northern Gothic artist. Later, during the second prime of Flemish painting, when the tradition began to fade in the North, Italy gave back the borrowed fruit. It drew the painters of Antwerp to Venice, and here they took from the offspring of Bellini, from Titian and Veronese, that which the North had denied them: colour. Rubens was the child of this wondrous marriage between North and South, and from him we may date the rise of modern painting. Like every genius, he had a disastrous influence on his immediate followers: Van Dyck was but a feeble epigone, as long as he followed in his master's footsteps. Italianism, which even in Rubens' northern fist was sometimes held in check with difficulty, degenerated into the grossest mannerism among his disciples. Van Dyck first came to his own when he had escaped from Rubens' jurisdiction, and at a first glance he seems to triumph most completely by qualities he did not share with Rubens. The influence of Rubens seemed to have died out, even in Flanders itself.

But it declined in a small domain, only to wax more vigorous in a wider field. The Frenchmen of the eighteenth century drew the sweetest melodies therefrom. They transformed the wanton love-song into dainty and polished verse. Among these airy folks, Rubens looks like a giant with a legion of dwarfs swarming over his thumb. They are careful to take no more from him than they can carry, but even this little is as much as they can manage. Watteau, the greatest of them, was the one most capable of resistance. He went back to the sources of Rubens' art, as if to strengthen himself at these, when the impression of what lay nearer to him became overpowering, and the Venetian element in him appears almost as the masculine antithesis to the soft seductive charm of the Flemish. Fragonard was the first to give himself up wholly to the spell, Fragonard, the most French of all the Frenchmen of his age, in whom everything was pure, picturesque harmony, even his melodious name. But even in his hands the exquisite fruit began to wither. France never tasted it again in such perfection. The art of a much later date which derived from Rubens required another and sedater element.

This, too, was a product of the great period. It gave birth to Velazquez. The whole sum of modern art is manufactured out of Rubens and Velazquez. They are both extremes, protagonists of stupendous powers, almost in excess of their actual accomplishment. We always feel as if we should some day light upon pictures by Velazquez more brilliant than the famous examples, as if everything in the Prado and in London were merely a collection of sketches for some great work surpassing them all. The same may be said of Rubens.

The obvious incompleteness of their accomplishment gives them a remarkable power that, centuries after their deaths, stirs the energy of all creative artists, and that even in their life-time moved their confrères to emulation. Nothing is more natural, than that we should recognise many different hands in the works of Rubens, and that there are so many contemporary variations on the Spaniard's originals. Velazquez himself repeatedly executed variations on the same canvas, and who can say whether the last was the best?

A third, the greatest of the age and of all ages, came to associate himself with these two, darker, deeper, more complex than the others, incomprehensibly unique

and yet more human in the highest sense. No school bears his name; there was a Rembrandt. This very fact makes him suspect to the present generation. Because he defies technical analysis, because he was a genius, because his results alone are valuable to us, and not his methods, which only lead the modern painter astray, we are accustomed, among modern artists, where methods are all-important, to see him looked upon with ill-concealed repulsion mingled with veneration, in striking contrast to the boundless admiration expressed for him by the laity.

A thousand things may be urged against Rembrandt, but as a fact they have nothing to do with him. We shall always be beside the mark if we judge him by standards that apply to others. He is but little concerned with painting as we understand it. By its means he created things that are more than the art due to human hands. A Rembrandt makes the air around it vibrate; it is like some splendidly sonorous voice, the very sound of which is pregnant with wisdom, before we grasp the words it utters.

He painted dignity, of the only kind we can thoroughly understand: the dignity of human beings. It is, of course, the dignity of man. He has but one rival here, Leonardo, whose pictures in the Louvre show the same penetration in approaching woman, the same lofty, purely intellectual—perhaps, here, over-intellectual—conception; in him we see a profound result of the Latin race, just as Rembrandt was the summing up of the Germanic. Such men as these may boldly accept responsibility for making art purely abstract, and we understand that cathedrals and palaces had to fall, that they might gaze out freely into eternity.

Rembrandt is a direct contradiction to the art which concerns itself with pure beauty of form. He is a strenuous prosaist, who, by the significance of his language, succeeds in lifting us to the heights only attainable to the ancients by the melody of poetic form. To the ideal of beauty of the Greeks he opposed an expression in which everything formal seems to be replaced by a consciousness of knowledge rendered intelligible in some mysterious fashion. It scarcely deals with beauty, it is too intimate for that; but it is as deeply rooted in our world of emotions and as natural to us as was the worship that rejoiced in the marble to the Greeks. By its means Rembrandt gave the most accurate expression imaginable to the deep moral difference that divides the two cultures, and further a testimony that we need not blush before the ancients, and that it is possible for us to make up for inferior fortune, inferior beauty, inferior power by superior intellectual gifts. From this representative standpoint it matters little that he was a Dutchman, and how he formed himself or was formed by others. All this was much more important in the case of Rubens, and most of all, in the case of Velazquez, who for this very reason may perhaps be accounted the least among the three.

There is a place in London where pictures by Velazquez and Rubens and Rembrandt hang together. The Wallace Collection is to Northern art what the Uffizi is to that of Florence. Here we may approach our men; they live and converse together like ordinary mortals. Here is Rembrandt's *Parable of the Unmerciful Servant:* the old man with the turban speaking to the three, the debtor and the two who have brought him before his master.

He speaks, indeed, to many more.

Rembrandt has been praised for his truth of observation, the vigour of his gestures and facial expression. Even the *Anatomy Lesson* has been lauded as masterly in this connection. I think that Frans Hals surpassed him in all these qualities, and that Rembrandt showed his greatness by his abandonment of these

REMBRANDT: DR. DEYMAN'S ANATOMY LESSON

RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM

cheap ambitions in his maturer years. Certain of his qualities are to be found in a higher degree in other Dutchmen, but he is the architect, the rest are only decorators. They seem mere painters of detail beside him. On one side of the picture I have mentioned hangs Hals' *Laughing Cavalier*—it seems mere boisterous chatter; on the other Velazquez' famous *Lady with a Fan;* she looks at us, cold and lifeless; the most exquisite Gainsborough sparkles on the opposite wall; it has the effect of a costume-picture. These were all painted to please; they have a touch of make-believe about them; a rich, a varied and a wondrous make-believe, of course. But they are not so necessary in the final sense as the Rembrandt.

The importance of every man lies in the importance he recognises in others. His value is of the same quality as the value he draws from life; that which seems momentous to him, is momentous in him. No conscious philosophic profundity is required in the process. Vermeer's little *Lace-Maker* is a stronger and deeper effort of concentration than acres of symbolic pictures. Instinct guides the hand of the master, but not the ego-instinct, rather that greater, indefinable instinct that illumines a sincere and healthy mind at times, when it can forget the little ego, who wants to paint fine pictures. Rembrandt had such moments, and only one artist since, a painter who has a close spiritual relation to him: Millet. The Wallace picture is like some colossal revelation. We ask ourselves whence these men have come, who are talking together. The famous chiaroscuro probably never played a more important part than here; it gives spirituality to the episode, and provides the cloud on which the Eternal Father was wont to sit in the days of Michelangelo. From out this magic circle the eyes gleam with strange intensity. And not only do the eyes of the four persons look at each other, but their very bodies; each line of the three servants is eloquent of some relation to the speaker, still more every light, every bit of colour. The play of planes is positively overpowering in its richness. How poor the use of linear effects by means of contour seems in comparison! Before this we think of the Primitives as truly primitive; the slender single threads on which they depended seems to have been transformed into a wondrous web, into which all emotions are drawn as into a rich, warm, many-coloured life. This richness gives increased depth to the theme. We discover not only the relations of the three listeners to the speaker, but those of the three to each other. They appear before us as so many generations, classes, species, aspects of the universe. Superficially, this variety is not much insisted upon. The servant and the man-at-arms are of the same age, and are, further, well-known models; one of them is the Joseph of the Berlin *Potiphar's Wife*, the other, unless my memory deceives me, reappears in several portraits. The older man of the three is Rembrandt's brother, whom he so often painted. Delacroix called Nature a dictionary. We might compare Rembrandt's models to the elements of style in classic buildings, elements that resemble each other, yet are perpetually combined to give different results. And, indeed, such pictorial art is only comparable to the noblest works of architecture, that stand outside the domain of trivial significance. Who asks what these men in the picture are talking about, who wishes to know what is happening here? What the old man is saying may be of the profoundest wisdom; it could only be dull, trivial stuff if we translated it into words; just as, on the other hand, an attempt to render Goethe's *Faust* in colour could only result in feeble painting. But we would fain repeat the experience, and have such solemn moments with our fellow creatures as these four men are having; if we are artists, we would fain

be heard with the same eloquently expressed comprehension as this old man, who with his left hand seems to be casting down the barrier that divides—my soul from thine !

. . . .

Rembrandt had no artistic progeny. He completed himself. Bode rightly assigns the *Unmerciful Servant* to his last period. It seems the work of one who had lived many times the years of the master. Any further application of the methods of this unique artist could only lead to failure : thus has Nature decreed concerning the giants of art. The sensual, rather than the intellectual, faculty is necessary for propagation, and this is true in art as in Nature. Rubens had a rich store thereof. His successors really did little but cast a veil over the unseemliness of his sensuality, and that of Frans Hals. The talents of the eighteenth-century Frenchmen were admirably suited to the task. This Rubensesque influence continued into the nineteenth century, and became a more serious but not a less beautiful thing, for which lovers of our modern painting are more than ever thankful. It was the banner upheld by Delacroix to which the revolutionary elements rallied against Classicism. It was not the gorgeous representative pictures of the Fleming that determined this reaction ; the vivifying influence was the life that seethed in his frenzied brushing, the riot of his vigorous senses, insisting as with a shout of joyous vitality on the present, the while the Empire determined to turn back once more in pilgrimage to the past.

REMBRANDT: THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT
WALLACE COLLECTION, LONDON

THE EMPIRE

THE classical reaction that took place in France at the close of the eighteenth century, when David suddenly gave up painting in the manner of Fragonard, strikes us as inconsistent at a first glance, because it was an outcome of the Revolution. It seems a contradiction that the antique should have become a revolutionary symptom, that an obvious retrogression should have been welcomed as the artistic expression of progress. The phenomenon is not to be explained by literary influences alone, nor by the gradual growth of the tendency in the years preceding the Revolution. That at a certain epoch, certain characters in Roman history excited peculiar sympathy and admiration, is not in itself enough to explain the substitution of the toga for modern dress, with a fine contempt for all material differences. What men were seeking in that dramatic moment—the most tremendous, perhaps, in the history of any nation—was a definite form of expression, a speech that could convey something of the dignity to which the people had risen in the Revolution, an art which could fix in plastic form the extraordinary elements of this great period. They were seeking, in fact, the simple ideal of popular art, a sign of the times that all might see from afar.

The art of the great Watteau's successors was altogether alien to such a conception. It found itself suddenly in irreconcilable opposition to its contemporaries. It is surprising that at a time when the guillotine was so busy its exponents should not have fared worse. For they were the faithful representatives of all anti-revolutionary instincts; not merely because they were an embodiment of the seductive period of the Monarchy, the most delicate deposit of the gay rococo style that had delighted the Court of Louis, but because their whole mode of thought and form of expression breathed hostility to the revolutionaries. In one of the many coarse illustrations of the scenes of horror of the closing century, a dainty cavalier is shown looking delightedly at a print in a bric-à-brac shop, while a Jacobin in a toga, the Phrygian cap on his dishevelled hair, laughingly drives a Roman sword into his ribs from behind. No more striking antithesis could be imagined than the delicate dilettante art of Fragonard, the decadent sense of enjoyment that found delight in St. Aubin's marvellous prints, and the Roman ideals of the youthful Republic. It almost seems as if the ancient parts of North and South had been reversed, as if culture had evolved the barbarian, and barbarism the man of culture.

The historical criticism that seems so obvious to us now, that sees salvation in the Rubens-Watteau tradition, and looks upon Classicism as an untoward interruption in the development of modern painting, was totally outside the ken of these Republicans. They had all the ingenuousness of youth; for the social upheaval had made them almost a new people. There was more affinity between a Frenchman and a native of the United States, than between the Parisian of the Monarchy and the Parisian of the Directory. That this youthfulness was a mere rejuvenescence, that the nation was the same in blood and was at the end of its powers, was

shown by the fact that it turned back to the past instead of creating something new, and that this renascence finally spent itself in a kind of Indian summer. But from their own standpoint the French were right ; not merely because they suddenly bethought them of the few drops of Roman blood in their veins, or because they, perhaps, recognised an alien strain in the Flemish element of the Watteau tradition—what was it to them that history declared this strain to have been present in Gothic art?—but because they desired at least to feel themselves Latins, if they could not be French, and above all, because they wanted something more in art than luxury, than work belonging only to the rich.

In the case of Napoleon, again, it was not mere prudence that made him take these aspirations of his people into account. A Nero with intelligence, a lusus naturæ made up of the most violent inconsistencies, a materialist, but so immense in his materialism that there was not space for him in modernity, a man possessed by a megalomania that the Roman period alone could have tolerated, laid hands on the helm, and conquered the world. The baroque daintiness of his periwigged predecessors could not suffice him for the setting of his drama ; he could not accept artistic consecration from the conquered present that lay writhing at his feet, but compelled the shadows of the gray past to form the nimbus round his throne. When a martial caprice drew him to Italy, it is natural to suppose that he did not pass unheeding through the ruins of an age in which he would fain have lived. To him it was not a foreign, hostile land ; he understood its loftiest art better than the Italians themselves, who looked on with scornful smiles, when he carried off their least prized pictures, the almost unknown early masters of their art. But the traces of Napoleon's passage through Italy are not solely those of the spoiler. His well-considered architectural renovations have something of the tender solicitude of the native prince, adorning his territory.

He took more away with him than Fra Angelico's pictures. Things irremovable, the mighty relics of antiquity and greatness, stamped themselves deeply on his soul, and he determined to build them anew at home, after his own fashion, in the Napoleonic vein.

And this same man, who carried off the horses from the portal of St. Mark's, gave a code to the moderns, and weakened the lands he could not conquer by falsifying their coinage—was, in short, modern in all his methods.

This modernity masquerading in a toga was inconsequent and prevented the working out of a systematic style. Napoleon had, in fact, no time to achieve style in monumental things ; it did not extend to the complicated buildings of his Roman prototypes, to say nothing of the Egyptians, certain samples of whose art he sent to Paris. What he achieved belongs mainly to the interior of the house—rooms, furniture, classic pictures, portable things . . .

Relatively speaking, architecture fell into the background. Michelangelo's Renaissance had given the world an architecture rather artistic than utilitarian. The Empire concerned itself exclusively with details, and though our recent appreciation of the cold distinction of Napoleonic furniture and ornament was not ill-founded, the artistic essence proper to it seems to slip between our fingers —perhaps this is the very reason of such appreciation.

The Empire style was a convulsive attempt to give a different direction to art-development by those who lacked the power to create it afresh. It is folly to see in this effort a mere classicistic tendency; it was a presentiment of that which moves us to-day, and begins to take tangible shape before us,

J. L. DAVID: PARIS AND HELEN

GROUP FROM THE PICTURE IN THE LOUVRE, PARIS

though as yet we have no formula for it: the socialisation of art; style, not only in pictures but in everything. The time was not yet ripe. Art was as yet untouched by those factors which the nineteenth century brought into play, those factors which gave material importance to the class that had won political power by the Revolution. The right to a civic style had been acquired, without the means to make use of that right. The idea of the citizen existed primarily only in the form of address adopted by the Republicans. It was not until he had created his social independence that he could find a form.

And it was because the Empire ideal, in France and Germany at least, failed to capture this fruitful sphere for which it was adapted, in which classicism might have become a means to an end, giving the impetus to a general modern artistic culture, after the manner of other archaistic tendencies of our day; because it selected the classic form, the worst it could have adopted, since it was the most complete and therefore the least capable of development—for all these reasons it degenerated, expressing itself in details, instead of creating a style.

In painting it revived the definite contour, "la probité de l'art," as Ingres called it, that structural element, which affords an immediate practical connection with the utilitarian art tendencies of the age, and for the annihilation of which painting in general had more or less consistently worked till this time. Style is line. And modern art was so far advanced, that Classicism could not be a mere echo, and the new line a mere repetition of the old. Capable hands took care that the classic line should become an enduring element in modern painting, and should exercise the most salutary influence to this day, though less directly perhaps than the Delacroix tradition of colour.

The majority of pedagogues can still urge very cogent reasons for the retention of Greek and Latin in the curriculum, not as vehicles of culture in themselves, but as the best possible form of gymnastics for the intellect; in the same way, the cool neutrality of classic form has its advantages as an educational factor. It is idiotic to expect a student to draw and paint from Nature, as idiotic as it would be to set a man who was taking his first lesson in mechanics before a modern steam-engine in order to make the elements of the science clear to him. The organs that are to do justice to the complex phenomena of Nature, must first be educated; that in Paris this training is still based upon classic tradition, explains to some extent the enormous difference between the French average of artistic proficiency, and that of other countries. The Frenchman goes to school, and to masters who, be they never so Philistine, know something of the principles of teaching. Lecoq de Boisbaudran, in whose school so many modern artists were formed, painted indifferently himself, but the brilliant system of grammar he managed to instil into his pupils, was none the less beneficial. In Paris, certain definite conceptions are imposed on the ebullient talents, that would prefer to cover large surfaces, regardless of what they represent; they are given the skeleton that must be the substructure, no matter how completely it may disappear under the luxuriant growth of individuality

INGRES

No pedagogic considerations are necessary to make us do justice to the great men who led the classic movement. The furious strife between Realism and Classicism is at an end. We have dropped our battle-cries and have learnt to see something more in these people than impersonal professors. They were above all, guardians of culture, who worked a kind of cure upon neglected æsthetic instincts. They not only took over an ancient form, renewing and transforming it in a highly original manner; they received and renewed the sense of form itself. This alone is enough to make Ingres immortal. Under him art became an expression of culture of the utmost purity, whereas under his master David it had reigned by virtue of a turbulent grandeur that bore the unmistakable stamp of the upstart. The creator of the *Coronation* was a great orator of tremendous power, the true imperial painter, who girded on Roman form as a superficial ornament that left his mighty loins free play. How little he really assimilated it may be seen when he reveals himself, as in several of his portraits; for instance, the brilliant unfinished picture of the Marquise de Pastouret by her child's cradle at the Château de Moreuil in Picardy, or the fine portraits in the Louvre, notably the beautiful picture of Madame de Sériziat with her child. In the extraordinary freshness of the colour and handling, this shows more affinity with Frans Hals than with Rome.

Ingres, on the contrary, was never realistic like this, even in his most unguarded moments. Lapauze, in his "Dessins de J. A. D. Ingres de Montauban" quotes the dictum that Poussin would never have been the great artist he was, if he had not professed a "doctrine." With Ingres this "doctrine" was not merely a scientific theory that excites a cheap smile to-day, but a conscious organisation of far-reaching artistic instincts. When Ingres became supreme, the great period of imperial activity was past. Men had learnt to reflect. In the land of classic art Napoleon had seen only the territory of predecessors akin to himself in spirit. Meanwhile men had drawn nearer to the soul of classic art, or rather to its divine body. Mengs' copies of the Pompeian frescoes had become widely known. Lord Elgin rescued the Parthenon sculptures, the Germans discovered the Æginetan remains. The field of art extended, and with it that of perception. David had been a disguised Roman, Ingres became a Greek, but in a very wide sense, far more universal from the purely æsthetic standpoint than Goethe, for instance. He discovered the Greek spirit in Giotto's frescoes, which he placed above those of Raphael as vehicles of expression, and copied "on his knees"; and yet he associated himself in friendly fashion with Viollet-le-Duc's tendencies. He followed after line. If later on he concentrated his sympathies more and more on the Greeks, it was because he found in them at first hand what he was seeking. He was as essentially a draughtsman as David was a painter; nay more, he was the greatest draughtsman the world has known. When the Renaissance discovered the marbles of the ancients, Italians and Frenchmen began to make statues. The age was still vigorous enough to essay the same material as that in which these masterpieces had been carried out. David tried his hand unsuccessfully at sculpture. Ingres forbore, but this renunciation concen-

J. L. DAVID: THE THREE LADIES OF GHENT
(LES TROIS DAMES DE GAND) LOUVRE, PARIS

trated his expressive force in the more restricted field, till it became a quintessence of extraordinary strength. He appears as a sort of reservoir of line, as one who wished to transmit all the mighty impulse he received to his form. In his *Odalisque*, his *Baigneuse*, and his *Roger délivrant Angélique*, he is like a bow strung to its utmost tension, before the elastic vigour of which our minds, enervated by contemplation of the colourists, involuntarily cower, as fearing to be transfixed. His *Bain Turc*, in the Princesse de Broglie's collection, is equal to Raphael's finest work, as truly one of the most brilliant consummations of our modern art, as were the Vatican frescoes in the art of the Renaissance. Taking him all in all, he was an incomparable artist, in spite of the comparisons he seems to suggest, no epigone, but the poetic embodiment of the instincts of a nation that had conquered the world, and saw in Napoleon's domination a natural symbol of its own greatness, a greatness so far beyond Napoleon that its political downfall remained a mere superficial episode, serving at most to stimulate its energies.

And it was not only the Frenchman in Ingres, but above all, the Northern instinct that manifested itself with greater energy than ever before, almost with the energy of a first encounter with the Greeks. He possessed the North before he possessed the South, and a good deal more than he himself supposed. I can never help thinking of Ingres' pencil portraits before drawings by Holbein, and of Ingres' painting before Vermeer's *Lace-maker*. The Northern strain in him gave him that intimacy, if we can so describe the quality, which we admire in his portraits of private persons. If nothing of his work remained but the pencil drawings in the Bonnat collection, he would be immortal. No artist has ever seized the thousand aspects of the outward man as did Ingres, and he did it on little pieces of paper and with pencils that gave only the sharpest line. His natural predilections no doubt work decisively here. At twenty he could draw what he liked. Bonnat has one of the earliest sheets, a unique portrait of M. Revoil, a drawing full of colour, that owes nothing to the sharp point. It hangs between the wonderful portraits of M. and Madame Leblanc, and it is difficult to believe that all three are by the same hand. He was eighteen years old when he did it. Many would have been satisfied to rest on such laurels. At twenty he looked upon it as a youthful error, and became Ingres.

Perhaps the Northern element was also the true reason why Ingres never impresses one as conventional in the narrow sense, and why one always arrives at a personal relation to him. We must not, of course, take the colouristic tendencies of our own day as the criterion by which to condemn all phenomena that do not take colour as the basis of pictorial art, nor judge of Ingres so coarsely as does, for instance, Montrosier, * whose attitude towards Ingres is typical of that of the older generation. He praises the painter's application! "Ne confondons pas la patience avec le génie," &c. Montrosier describes how he once stood before a Van Dyck with a "really great" artist, and how the artist laid down the law as follows:

"This artist [Van Dyck] was the painter of the decadence. All his persons have the same gestures. Compare him with Holbein: when the latter paints a miser, his gesture is avaricious; when he portrays a soldier, it is peremptory; when the character is a philosopher, it is serious; when a lover, passionate . . ."

And Montrosier adds complacently that nothing could be more judicious, and that the reproach might be addressed to Ingres as pertinently as to Van Dyck!

* "Peintres Modernes." Paris, 1882.

Finally he says of him what Rousseau said of the woman-writer and woman-painter : "Il n'a pas conclu."

Such criticism is beneath contempt. If ever a painter understood the conclusions that escape this author it was Ingres. We are tempted to ask if ever, even at the time of the Crusades, there were people whose attitude towards culture was so gross as that of the generation which, thank God, is nearing its end. One of its worst crimes is a certain grudging recognition it accords as a last insult to Ingres. We cannot expect a Delacroix to applaud his arch-enemy; we can understand the aversion he inspired in artists occupied with problems of colour. Artists have a right to be idiots ; they owe it to themselves, indeed, and Ingres himself was no exception to this rule. He was not only a prescription, a doctrine, but a gigantic factor, whose eclecticism was a subsidiary thing, yet who, if we take him aright, placed his exemplars in a new and purely æsthetic aspect, that of culture. David was the academician, too essentially different, too uncultured, to give new life to the inheritance from the past. He accepted it without reflection, when he did not disregard it. Raphael Mengs was a German, and took a sentimental view of the ancients ; he was not sufficiently gifted to hand it on. Ingres said—I think his pupil Janmot records the phrase—"Il faut manger cela." His quest of pure form in the works of the ancients has been condemned as narrow; it was really great. He wanted to paint arabesques, not to point a moral.

The principle of his form of expression is no longer a subject of debate. What might have been unseasonable and absurd in others was a great achievement in him, because he succeeded in it. It is strange that the Romanticists should have been so enthralled by Delacroix that they could not even see the intention of the painter of the *Odalisque*. Baudelaire, of course, could not guess how negligible his own romanticism and how indispensable Ingres' non-idealism would some day seem to us. They are always harping on his colour. Baudelaire makes the amazing statement that Ingres had an ambition to shine as a colourist, that he had dreams of competing with Velazquez and Lawrence, &c.* They depreciate him for not having accomplished what no reasonable person can suppose him ever to have attempted. As a fact, Ingres simply tinted his planes, that is to say, he overlaid his modelé with colour. It is possible that this colour would be very ugly if applied elsewhere ; I have not the courage to assert that it was not the right thing, used as he used it. Ingres once made the very profound remark that a great artist can always get the colour that suits his drawing. Perhaps some day his will be extolled to the skies. As to his painting, on the other hand, there are no longer two opinions. The *Madame Granger* of the Centennial Exhibition, in which the painter Granger collaborated, is an immortal work, and no great imaginative effort was required in 1900, to find the way from this to Courbet or to the *Sortie de Bal* of Bazille, Manet's comrade and pupil. Considerations of this sort, though from my point of view they touch but a small part of Ingres' activity, show how far modern French artists are justified in acclaiming him as the father of Naturalism.†

* Baudelaire's Salon of 1846, in his "Curiosités Esthétiques."

† Roger Marx sees in him "un réaliste impénitent inexorable, le fondateur officiel du naturalisme," agreeing here with Baudelaire. It is obvious that appreciation of Ingres is vitiated by the French racial instinct. Or at least, such opinions, which are in direct contradiction, again, to those of Montrosier, are only to be explained if we say that the convention, which enabled Ingres to express himself to perfection, is so natural to the French, that they lose sight of the immensely specific tendency it induced in him. If there is any comprehensible meaning at all in the term Naturalism, it can only

INGRES: DRAWING OF A LADY

As a fact, his importance is hardly to be overlooked even in the present. Puvis is dead, Degas an old man; but the medicine offered by the same hand to these two widely different temperaments is not yet exhausted. The right stomach is necessary if it is to work beneficially; a constitution that, answering at once to treatment, reacts and gives health to the body. The simile applies perfectly to the doctrine of Ingres. Classicism became a poison everywhere where vigour was lacking, in Germany at the beginning of the last century, in England in our own times. Even here, however, it worked beneficently in so far as it cleared the way, and made room for other things.

be used as an antithesis to inherited rule, and must refer to the unbridled play of instincts, always superadded by Ingres to an accepted formula. Marx's pronouncement is the more remarkable, in that he rightly sees in Ingres' portraits a continuation of those of David. All that is erroneously said of Ingres might be more aptly applied to David, whose sympathy with the less chastened Roman ideal of form made him more or less a Naturalist as compared with Ingres, and who consequently excelled in his portraits, whereas his pupil never succeeded, even in his most brilliant portraits, in eclipsing his *Odalisque* and other works of the same rank. And is not the difference in the disciples of the pair a striking proof of this contention? No Ingres could have produced a Gros. On the one hand we have the boisterous fugue of a gifted plebeian, on the other the lyric melody of Chassériau.

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY DÜRER

GERMAN ART

GERMANY now made atonement for the dependence on French art that had marked the eighteenth century. Since the time of Dürer there had been no great painter in Germany, and even at this era of florescence the essential genius of German art expressed itself rather in design than in painting. On the other hand, Germany was the one country in which the Germanic tradition had remained pure, and where the influence of the Renaissance had been almost imperceptible. The political events of the seventeenth century, the desolation wrought by the Thirty Years War, were not the only causes that deterred her from taking part in the beneficent artistic consummation, the migrations, so to speak, of the artistic instincts of various lands, that signalised the seventeenth, and still more, the eighteenth century. She was less impressionable than other countries. They, too, had known the scourge of war; we have, indeed, instances of nations who produced their greatest painters in periods of deepest political depression. The greatest poets of Germany sang in the darkest days of her history. If there is no parallel to this in her art, it is because her genius is deficient in the pictorial instinct. The German is a musician, a poet, but not a painter. This opinion may be maintained even before the works of the most brilliant of the early German masters, when we see these out of Germany. The Tribuna of the Uffizi in Florence contains marvellous pictures both by Italians and Germans. Dürer's *Adoration of the Kings* and Cranach's *Eve* are classic examples of the masters, and as it happens, their pictorial qualities reach their highest point of accomplishment in these works, notably in the case of Dürer. (To see Cranach at his greatest, we ought perhaps to supplement the *Eve* by the *Nymph* in the Leipzig Museum.) Yet, looking at the two examples we have cited in this place, it is just their pictorial qualities that seem the least admirable of their merits. Marvellous as is the wealth of detail in the Dürer, exquisite as is the cool nudity of the *Eve*, they seem to belong to a different art from that of the Raphaels and Titians beside them. It is as if accident had provided their authors with the same materials for wholly different purposes, and it seems scarcely possible that their works should have been contemporary with Raphael's. What we admire in the one, we forget entirely before the other. This is not due to a difference of personality, such as that which distinguishes a Raphael from a Leonardo; it is not the difference of nationality, as in the case of an Antonello and a Bellini, nor the dissimilarities of period and culture—for great as these may be, a simultaneous study not only of Italian and Northern examples, but of the works of all possible cultures, has so accustomed us to them that they have become hardly more than a question of costume. The difference here is one of species, irreconcilable as the antithesis on which they partly rest: that of painting and sculpture, the difference between two arts.

German art has never freed itself from the Gothic tradition. Its dearest, most characteristic qualities remained Gothic, even after the Gothic form had

INGRES: MADAME RIVIÈRE
LOUVRE, PARIS

disappeared; in other words, the Germans produced their effects by outline and not by planes. For this reason they show to great advantage in wood-engraving; Dürer is more especially impressive in his prints.

It is, of course, the same characteristic which originally differentiated North and South, that which distinguishes a Francis I. by Clouet from a Francis I. by Titian. But that the distinction should have persisted in Germany, when it has died out in all other Northern lands, is certainly remarkable. We may even say that it became more emphatic with time, that certain of the early German masters, Stephan Lochner and his circle, for instance, had a stronger sense of the pictorial than later painters of equal talents, and that in Germany we cannot trace that development of draughtsmanship into painting which we note in Flemish and Dutch art. There are portraits by Holbein that recall Giorgione; but what Clouet took from him was not his sympathy with paint. No one can hesitate which to prefer as between François Clouet and Titian, though both are equally imposing. The pictorial quality in the Francis I. in the Louvre, by Titian, is so seductive, so much more human in its stately splendour, so much more natural in the means by which the expression of greatness is obtained, that it not only seems nearer to us but more important. Clouet's greatness is more a result of a great convention; Titian's is the overwhelming personality of the artist, which makes the vehicle of his art a material peculiarly his own, and wholly subservient to his purpose, a personality to whose gifted vision a medal was a sufficient source of inspiration for this vital portrait.

The linear convention persists among the Germans; and in its progress it manifests qualities of design, but never of painting. Take any purely German artist of our age, from Rethel and Schwind to Gebhardt and Thoma, Kraus and Menzel: these are typical Germans, without a drop of foreign blood; they are all draughtsmen. So, too, was the only German artist of the eighteenth century, Chodowiecki. If we judge them as painters we wrong them; as painters they seem old-fashioned; Frenchmen and Dutchmen of the fourth rank excelled them. The smallest pencil drawing by Menzel tells us more of the artist than any of his oily paintings,* interesting though these may be socially and historically, and his immortal illustrations for Kugler's history are far more impressive than his pictures of the same subjects.

It is not surprising that this ancient Germanic tendency should have found complete satisfaction in a Classicism of pure design, indifferent and even hostile to colour, nor that its exponents should finally, under Carstens, have arrived at the logical conclusion of dispensing altogether with colour. Modern criticism has perhaps dealt somewhat perfunctorily with Carstens and his successors, just as it has with the classic phase of Goethe and of Schiller. In the case of the poets, is it not probable that those strong and lucid minds chose more wisely than their descendants can judge? It is pertinent to ask: would they have done finer work on other lines? As regards Mengs and Carstens we may answer such a question unhesitatingly in the negative. Mengs did his best work in Italy, and not with his Gallicised portraits. Carstens, Overbeck, and Cornelius again were no geniuses, and they turned their relative gifts to the best possible account. If they had not had a creed for their guidance they would probably have accomplished even less than they did, and we should not have found compensation for their respectable tedium in those happily inspired details which only highly disciplined taste could

* I except certain admirable little early pictures.

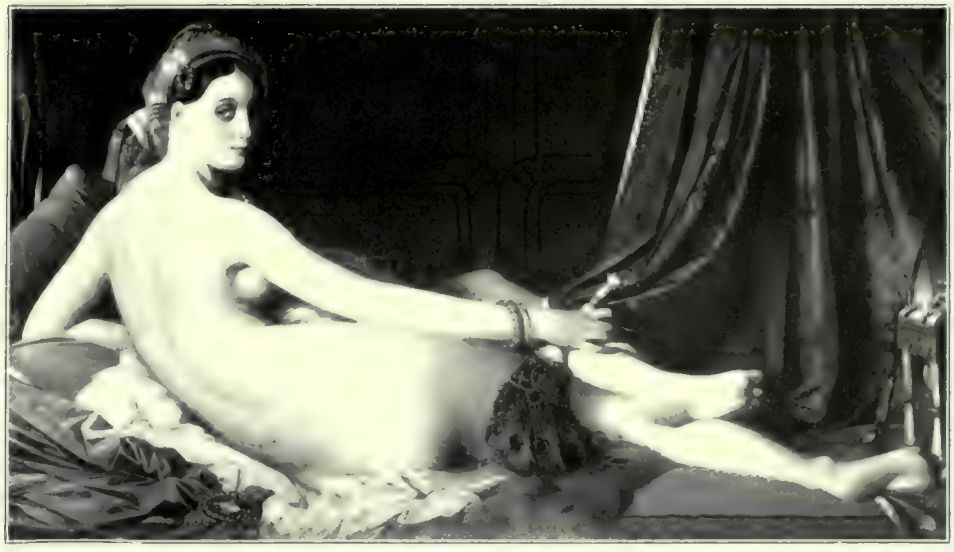
have achieved. This applies in a still greater degree to Genelli, the greatest man of this little period, whose worse caprices cannot spoil our pleasure in his admirable drawings.

Be this as it may, Winckelmann was inspired by a sound and brilliant instinct, of far greater importance than the very vulnerable principles he and Goethe deduced from it, principles which also evoked a work so typical of the German attitude to art, as Lessing's "Laokoön."

It is surely by a curious irony that the writings of the two Germans, Winckelmann and Mengs, exercised their most fruitful influence on the artists of France. Of course their doctrine harmonised here with an ancient racial instinct—a consideration that was apt to be forgotten at the time of the supremacy of the French language. It was accepted in France, not because those who assimilated it were fit for nothing else, and had nothing to lose; but because they possessed the just counterpoise, and could maintain their equilibrium against the classical onslaught. Compare David's portraits with those of Cornelius and Carstens. France was trying the classical experiment for the second time. Poussin had been in Rome two hundred years before. A purely pictorial school had arisen in France between the two phases, and though David and Ingres abjured this in their polemics, they were not able to throw it off entirely in practice. The radical difference in the reaction that took place against Classicism in France and Germany is highly characteristic. France had her Géricault and her Delacroix, Germany the "Nazarenes," again a school of draughtsmen, who superposed on the classical line another which was partly a watery Pre-Raphaelism, partly a sentimental early German revival, wholly inadequate for the fresco-painting to which the megalomania of Cornelius attempted to apply it. The Munich frescoes are perhaps the sorriest phenomenon of impotence in existence; lower than this it would be impossible to sink.

Rethel and Schwind were the only strong personalities that rose among the vapid sentimentalities of Düsseldorf and Munich. Schwind gave vigour to the German note of Steinle and Führich. He, again, was a Gothic master, tenderer, softer, more lyrical than his prototypes. He might be called the German Fra Angelico, but he did not play the same part in painting as the Italian. He revived that ancient German strain, the most original manifestation of the German spirit, the Volkslied, giving it artistic expression no less sincere than the limpid fervour of Walther von der Vogelweide. He wrote his pictures, as if they had been poems; we feel as if we were turning over the pages of some beautiful book as we look at his works. Ludwig Richter brought this book into the cosy atmosphere of homely German living rooms. Is there any one in these days with the courage—or the pen!—to write such artless things?

Germany made up in the nineteenth century for what she had missed in the seventeenth—the assimilation of Italian and other ideals. To this tardy development is due her retention of some fragments of the ancient German tradition. This distinguishes Germany from France and England. Neither of these has an original art, though they have original painters. What we describe as French or English now is as definite to us as the difference between black and white; but each of these conceptions appears upon analysis extremely complicated. Dividing them into their component parts, we can recognise every element, but we find nothing of early French or early English, directly we get away from what is purely superficial and ethnographical—types of faces and so on—and consider the



INGRES: LA GRANDE ODALISQUE

LOUVRE, PARIS

form of expression. Roughly speaking they are both, and more especially the French, a continuation of the amalgamated painting of Italians, Flemings, Dutchmen, and that great master, Holbein. There are pictures by French Primitives, in the Louvre, notably the superb *Martyrdom of St. Denis* ascribed to Jean Malouel, so strikingly akin to the Italians of the time of Fra Angelico in colour, if not altogether in composition, that we should not be surprised some day to find them recognised as Italian works. It is only the black-bearded executioner in the so-called Malouel who betrays the hand of the Northener. Fouquet was the first great Frenchman, and though we may wax enthusiastic over the wonderful picture lately acquired by the Berlin Museum, and the magnificent *Charles VII.* in the Louvre, Fouquet was obviously a continuation of Van Eyck. Nicolas Froment is a pure Fleming, and the coarsest of them all. Clouet grew up near Holbein, Poussin journeyed to Rome, Watteau came from Venice, Delacroix from Rubens; the landscape painters of 1830 brought the Dutchmen to France, Manet the Spaniards, Degas the Japanese . . . And in spite of all this, how unreasonable should we be not to see one and the same painting in this history, one body, the multitudinous portions of which only serve to make it invincible!

The Germans have no German painting, but they have still an original art. It is true that the actual German ideal seems hardly a new acquisition, fond as we are of describing it as such, but rather an ancient much-prized piece of furniture, which lay forgotten in the attic, while the enemy was plundering the house, until, when the time came to set everything in order again, the worthy housewife, Nationality, brought it triumphantly forth. Unhappily, clean and polish it as we will, it does not suit our new house. The two hundred years or so that it lay in the loft cannot be rubbed away. Now French painting, though somewhat younger, is still old enough. Why then is there no suggestion of the lumber-room in its tradition? Why is French art always modern, German art always old-fashioned?

Because France received the necessary new blood by pairing at the right time, when she was fresh and vigorous, and fusion by means of simple natural instincts was possible, whereas Germany remained too long unmated.

Fruitful intercourse began for her in the nineteenth century, for Frederick the Great's French acquisitions remained mere foreign imports during his life, beneficent as they proved afterwards to Pesne's circle and Tassaert's pupils, almost against their will. In the nineteenth century, however, this intercourse was not a leavening of the whole mass, as it had been in other lands, but the contact of individuals, and that is why the great Germans stand so high. Germany had no popular requirements to impose upon them; thrown entirely upon their own resources, they perfected what their forefathers had forgotten, and this they did with individual, and not with national power.

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY DÜRER

ENGLAND'S CONTRIBUTION

HOGARTH

ENGLAND had amateurs before she possessed an art. Henry VIII. was Holbein's best customer. Charles I.'s advisers bought the finest works of the Italians, Flemings, and Dutchmen. From the time of Van Dyck, the great and little masters of the seventeenth century had a second home on the Thames. If a taste for the arts had been the determining factor, we might well wonder with Macaulay why, at the end of Charles II.'s reign, England had no native artist whose name deserved remembrance. But this very wonder touches a portion of the problem presented by the history of art in the island kingdom. For as a fact this poverty was by no means astonishing, and the present state of things in England is a consequence of those same causes which Macaulay overlooked. The start was momentous. All art is to some extent illustration, especially all youthful art. It should be so, just as the first stories that delight a child should be fairy tales. But English art was not. It did not spring from the nation, but came from without. It matters little that its first products were imports, for the same thing happened in other lands. But it was the demand and not only the supply that was an importation. The English tried to graft before they had a stock. If German art resisted inoculation overmuch, English art went to the opposite extreme. The faults of German art were errors of development, the results of a violent interruption in middle age. It had a happy nursery. English art had none. Lacking youth, it lacked also enthusiasm, confident self-surrender to a great cause, the earnest purpose which nerves the powers, gives self-sacrificing earnestness to individualism to help it on its way, and rears, not egotists, but heroes. Every art requires concrete ideals at the beginning, a body that even the poor can grasp and understand, in order to rise to spiritual heights above all material aims. It was only the essays of primitive times in the simplest variations which gave the period of fruition power to materialise the abstractions of its ideal, and to create an art which still points out the path to the future. All the elements of a nation must contribute to successful natural selection. Although in our own times progress inevitably leads to an aristocracy which sells the enjoyment of our highest good at a steadily increasing price, the beginning was always purely democratic, and the remembrance of this past, the knowledge that things were not thus brought about in purely arbitrary fashion, comforts us in the contemplation of our multiple refinements. England's dawning art was not the usual necessary utterance of the race. Not national but plutocratic instincts stood round its cradle. It began with a commercial commodity, the stereotyped portrait. Having so much, rich people wished to have pictures too.

This origin deprived English painting of the power to speak to the hearts of men. From the first it was by nature what it has now become of necessity: luxury,

and from this it took its character. To this it has remained faithful to the present day, and this distinguishes it from all other national arts. Luxury does not rob the others of their loftiest heritage, the function of stimulating the noblest impulses of the nation, and of asserting themselves against its baser instincts, of remaining a language to the evolution of which the best contribute, even if the people, having learnt fresh combinations in the course of ages, no longer listen to it. But the art of England at the beginning of the eighteenth century was not only non-lingual, but anti-lingual. It veiled the thing to be expressed, the natural impulse, and offered paint to its customers. Instead of painting faces, it rouged them, dwelt upon costume and social convention, represented people as they wished to be reflected in the mirror of fashionable esteem, and was fashion rather than art.

Two great men were ashamed of this tendency, and attempted to give a more virile tone to their native art. The greater of these was Hogarth. He retrieved what the others had missed, began to speak to his people by its means, was an illustrator. He did not tell his story in conspicuous frescoes ; the age had become too parsimonious for such outlay. We shall see that he nevertheless showed the distinctive characteristics of the great beginners of national artistic manifestations, without belying the century in which he lived or the task of the great personalities of our modern world. Only one of his successors showed a mental vigour equal to his—Constable. These rare spirits tower high above their compatriots, and their very greatness prevented them from giving a rich blessing to their land. They had their origin in opposition to the motive forces of English art-life, and threw back to the elementary, innate peculiarities of the race : they were Englishmen before they became artists, men strong and wise before, urged by the necessity of expressing themselves according to their temperament, they chose their craft ; they had something to say before they had mastered their language. Hence they were hardly understood in their native land as they deserved to be. But what their fatherland lost, preferring the idols of the day, has been the gain of all Europe. Just these men, who were Englishmen, who meant to speak only to their own people, who are inconceivable in any other land, have found comprehension for their best among foreigners, and borne their richest fruit on alien soil.

It is significant that Hogarth began at once with a reaction. His art was, and had of necessity to be, a negation of all his countrymen had hitherto produced. This was his tragedy, for this negation determined the sterile relation of his unique fecundity to England. We need not ask how far he suffered under it. Tragedy in the history of art does not depend on the fate of individuals. It is an established fact that the negative beginning of his art gave a false direction to the relation of his countrymen to him from the very outset.

The peculiar development of English culture, which, protected by the position of the country, passed into modern materialism more rapidly than that of any other nation, caused a premature expression of problems in art as in other domains. In all progress there is a simultaneous working of analytical and synthetical elements. Every great artist is at once affirmation and denial. The sound economy of national development depends on the adjustment of these conflicting tendencies, so that no stronger negation may be expected from the people than it can bear at a given moment, in order to obtain positive advantage from the expression of genius. Hogarth denied at a stage of development when what the nation needed above all was a positive element. His mockery was directed against a latent national possession, attested by his own art, but the sting came too soon to be recognised as a stimulating

HOGARTH: PEG WOFFINGTON

SIR EDWARD TENNANT'S COLLECTION

synthesis. His first achievement, the caricature of William Kent, which dethroned the bugbear of English society, tickled the risible muscles of his countrymen, and this was its only result. Nevertheless, it had a very strong effect, if we may judge by the episodes retailed by contemporaries. Some feared him, and others took a malicious pleasure in his satire. He was looked upon as at least an amusing author. Charles Lamb's dictum, that Hogarth was his favourite reading after Shakespeare, marked the highest degree of appreciation vouchsafed him. It was at once a doubtful tribute to Shakespeare and a depreciation of Hogarth. No one recognised the new world of form in this jester, the enthusiastic affirmation which expressed itself with all the forces of the noblest optimism, and to which negation served merely as the outward husk ; it was not, indeed, possible for any one to recognise it. For such recognition would have implied a culture for which Hogarth himself supplied the first elements. It would be unjust to wonder that he was misjudged. It is certain that Hogarth could only deal as he did with the sting that had been transformed into a paint-brush, and just as certain that his contemporaries could only offer him a sympathy rooted in error, to which all influence on æsthetic culture was denied. Walpole would have been as great a genius as Hogarth himself, could he have appreciated Hogarth better than he did, and even in such a case his isolated testimony would have had no result. The sphere to which a man's wit reveals itself is removed by many strata from that other in which beauty of form is understood. Even a cultivated race like the French could not do justice to Daumier a century later for the same reason, although Daumier only veiled the national affinity to the antique spirit in the most superficial manner. Recognition of some easily apprehended quality suffices to obscure nobler traits in the consciousness of the people. How much the more certain was this to be the case with a nation whose instinct for artistic things had barely been awakened !

Hogarth himself was hardly conscious of his own importance at first. His inexorable laughter alone seems to have inspired him. He had a pleasure in horrible situations which would remind us of Goya, were he not devoid of any kind of mysticism, a typical carnivorous Englishman, direct, exact, the true son of his native land. He laughed like an Englishman ; he had the characteristic cruelty of English comedy, which still strikes us as a strange world when we see it displayed in the circus by grotesque clowns beating each other black and blue. That which makes the effect is the naturalness, the logical quality in the nonsense of exaggeration, the style in the extravagance. This style does not concern itself with complications. It is as evident in the laconic structure of English colloquy as in the dry abruptness with which John Bull gets his own way everywhere. The cabman on the high perch of his hansom commands it no less than the peer in the Upper House. It is a style which impresses by something in it that is self-evident and absolutely non-academic. We should call it barbaric, were it not so logical and so natural.

Hogarth's pictures look like primitive art at a first glance. His early engravings in particular have a thoroughly popular character. The episode is well to the fore. The only recognisable intention is the determination to show everything that happened at the given moment on the given spot. And what a multitude of things are happening ! There is no corner in which we shall not find the contents of some milk-pail splashing over a courtier's brocade, some drunken soldier fondling a wench, something shattered or destroyed. Everything is absolutely credible, in spite of—nay, indeed, because of—the impossible piling one upon another of

every imaginable scene. We do not at once know how far the presentment is art, because at the moment we have not all the data for comparison by which to check our impression; but one thing is evident, that we are dealing with realities. We have the same sensation here as before Callot's engravings or the elder Breughel's snow-scenes. No one thinks of taking these painted stories for history, and no one doubts their actuality. These things seem to us more true than probable, and pass unchallenged, although if written or described, the same events would provoke a smile at the artlessness of the statement. This comes from the fact that these incidents were composed for their own sakes, and not with an eye to the spectator. The actors in them are taking their pleasure, beating, deceiving, and murdering each other for their own satisfaction. No glance ever strays across the footlights to the audience. This is carried so far as to make some of the episodes incomprehensible. We cannot unravel the meaning of certain details in the mummeries of *The Fair*, or understand quite what is happening in the *March to Finchley* or the *Four Times of the Day*. It is difficult to connect the various sections of the great series in the National Gallery and the Soane Museum. There was no lack of commentators in the eighteenth century, and among these the Germans were of course prominent.* The result could but be negative. The value lies in the very things that elude the commentator, that escape an analysis of the historical, the humorous, and the satirical elements. Only a very ingenuous mind will suppose that the incidents in Hogarth's pictures were really transcribed, that people displayed their passions with so little reticence, and showed such a lack of restraint under all circumstances. Hogarth did not witness the dramas he depicted. But he grasped the dramatic possibilities of his age in a manner that makes him comparable to Shakespeare, if we set aside the usual significance of the drama, to which Shakespeare gave such a noble interpretation, and turn our thoughts away from that which poetry contributes to the structure of the piece upon the boards, from the specific character of the genre. Shakespeare heard what the people about him were saying, and pondered their speech. And he created his immortal plays because he was able to weld everything he absorbed into an organic whole, because the amalgam was just as strong as the power with which he grasped what the outside world had to offer him. Hogarth had an intense perception of the typical movements of his characters under the stress of emotion; like Daumier after him, he grasped their fashion of laughing and crying, and brought them into a relation which harmonises with the peculiarity of the parts in a marvellous fashion. We might almost imagine that the artist saw all the details that fascinated him distorted, with jagged broken organs, pressing forward to unite with others, in order that so they might produce a reasonable result, the only thing that seems reality to the artist, form. We care little what story Shakespeare treats, whether he deals with a Brutus, an Othello, or a Falstaff, for

* See Lichtenberg's famous "Ausführliche Erklärung der Hogarthschen Kupferstiche" (Göttingen 1794). The whole of the literature dealing with Hogarth down to our own times is a cheap recapitulation of his wit. His contemporaries are mainly concerned for the morality of their hero, John Trusler, for instance, in "The Works of Mr. Hogarth Moralized" (London, 1768), and Rouquet in the over-rated letters in which he sententiously observes: "N'allez pourtant pas vous imaginer qu'il y ait quelquechose d'obscène, selon les mœurs Angloises, dans les tableaux de Monsieur Hogarth" (Lettres de Monsieur . . . à un de ses amis à Paris pour lui expliquer les estampes de Monsieur Hogarth (London, 1746). Even the biographers of our day have made Hogarth's moral their text. Armstrong and Dobson were the first to attempt an appreciation of the *artist* in their important volume (Heinemann, London, 1902).

he remains the same concentrated Englishman, whether he applies his poetry to Roman or to Venetian legend. Neither are we greatly concerned whether tears or smiles predominate in the drama, for we recognise these more general conceptions as the instruments of higher powers, and hence the question as to whether the drama agrees with the traditional event loses its importance for us. Things had to be as the poet has made them. History is false if it teaches us otherwise, or rather, it teaches other things, not those with which he dealt. Thus Hogarth—in a humbler, less perfectly abstract manner—carries conviction by the amalgam which unites his particles. The isolated local significance does not give the sense. The amalgam is just as much a result of the methods of formative art, just as visible, that is to say, as Shakespeare's marvellous power in suiting everything to the organs with which we are best able to absorb his gift. In the one case the power of words rises to abnormal heights, in the other the play of lines and planes and colour. It is not their wit or their situations which make Shakespeare and Hogarth comparable; the elements in these which seem alike are as different as possible; it is their common faculty for making their occurrences live before our eyes. They achieved this in different ways. The resemblance springs from a distant affinity in creative impulse, due to the fact that they belonged to the same country. Like Shakespeare, Hogarth required the incentive he gained from the opposition of his own personality to the activities of his contemporaries, and it is obvious that his passion could not have found expression in still-life. His anecdotes, unessential as they are to the immortal quality of his art, are as inalienably a part of him as are "Hamlet," "Macbeth," and the historical plays a part of Shakespeare. But when we speak thus, we do not look upon the anecdotes as objective, as the material circumstances which stimulated the creation, but we see them as parts of the creator, and make use of them as necessary symbols for certain portions of his nature. We mean Shakespeare when we talk of "Macbeth," and we mean Hogarth to a certain extent when we mention *Southwark Fair*. The fact that this process is much easier in the case of Shakespeare, that we feel we possess immeasurably more of him than the stories he actually left us, and that the abstraction he accomplished was far greater than that of Hogarth, places the poet far above the painter. Shakespeare has shown himself in a hundred gradations, whereas, compared with him, Hogarth was content with a narrow scale.

Hence, the incomprehensibility of certain of Hogarth's works, notably the engravings, which preserve the reproductive character of all the prints of the day, does not in the least diminish our enjoyment. We do not understand the details of the episodes, but we grasp the general intention better than the artist's contemporaries, who got no further than the allusions. Not in these, for which his contemporaries had ten, and we have a hundred, interpretations ready, does the intangible dramatic quality lie, but in the combination of emotions, the eloquent gestures accompanying a varying dance. The strophe about the mystical dance in Milton's "Paradise Lost," which Hogarth quotes in his "Analysis of Beauty," might stand as the motto of his own art:

> Mystical dance!
> Mazes intricate
> Eccentric, intervolved, yet regular
> Then most, when most irregular they seem.

Like every great artist, he danced his works, and his rhythm is so powerful that it

helps us too over the passages which our curiosity would fain snatch from the context and hand over to the speculations of the understanding.

The genesis of his works substantiates this basic quality of all Hogarth's art. The drawings for his engravings in the British Museum and in the Fairfax Murray collection, if we compare them with the ultimate prints, show that the primary preoccupation was neither satire nor comedy, but rhythm. Only a few of these drawings are first sketches. It is evident that Hogarth made a variety of studies before he arrived at his final conception. There are drawings which approach the definitive result very closely, and certainly do not represent the master's first idea, as, for instance, Mr. Fairfax Murray's red chalk drawings for *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street*. Even in these we note how Hogarth made the illustrative quality more pronounced in transferring them to the copper-plate. Others reveal the comic element hardly at all, or only in slight indications. The drastic quality lurks, inarticulate as yet, in the play of dancing lines. In the drawing for the eleventh plate of the cycle *Industry and Idleness*, nearly the whole of the sketches for which are in the British Museum—a collection that adds amazingly to our sum of knowledge of the master—the seething multitude in the public square, with its innumerable heads, dominates the more intimate significance of the plate. The sketch for the shop scene in the same series, which was never carried out on the copper, does not as yet indicate whether the sentiment of this scene was to be grave or gay, but it divides the masses with irresistible clarity, and gives the lines an expressive force that recalls Rembrandt. The manner in which the broadly washed planes flow about the structure of lines again suggests Daumier. Other sheets of the same series are pure dix-huitième siècle. The spectator's eye participates in the quivering movement of the microscopic curves, and communicates only a beneficent vibration of forms to the mind. In the *Banquet*—the drawing for the eighth plate—a child seems to have held the pen. Everything sways, even the lines of the architecture. Slightly modified, the outline of the seated figures might represent the wooded background of a drawing by Both. The renunciation of detail might almost be described as playful in its arbitrariness. But all this child-like element is really sincerity and genius. The ensemble is ensured in an incomprehensible fashion. There is no insistence on the psychological significance of any particular group; the theme is the room with the long table of diners, whose animal function is expressed by a saltatory line. It seems almost as if satire, which is wont to find its objective in human figures, had here made the room alone the butt, giving it the semblance of some rococo face, full of lines and furrows. When we have once grasped this, we shall recognise this same physiognomy in all Hogarth's interiors, even in those where the single faces seek to engage our whole attention.

And further, we shall see in these drawings a fact confirmed by the pictures, and obvious to every one who has studied the artist's work thoroughly, that Hogarth did not keep closely to Nature, and was by no means intent on the direct reflection of the material world. I do not feel at all assured that Muther was right in asserting* that he was in the habit of sketching from the life in gaming-hells, brothels, and dram-shops. I know no drawing of which this might safely be predicated. It is, of course, evident that he did not paint these haunts and their inmates from fancy, and that, like the author of "Moll Flanders," he had an extensive personal knowledge of them. But he did not copy them. I am inclined to think that these places and their customs were not very repulsive to him; it would perhaps not be

* "Geschichte der englischen Malerei" (S. Fischer, 1903).

HOGARTH: UNUSED SKETCH FOR "INDUSTRY AND IDLENESS"
BRITISH MUSEUM, LONDON

too much to say that he was at his ease in them, in so far as the morality of this moralist allowed him to be. Hence he had no need to copy them. He had the instinct for these centres which no copying, had it been practised for a hundred years, could have replaced. And what was better still, he had universal instincts, not only for this shady side of life, but for every life; he had the remarkable faculty for expression which creates plastic forms out of what to ordinary mortals becomes more or less conscious experience.

The biographical notices of Hogarth moreover give us some very definite indications of his relations to Nature. We learn that he worked almost exclusively from memory. He found, he tells us, "that he who could by any means acquire and retain in his memory perfect ideas of the subjects he meant to draw, would have as clear a knowledge of the figure as a man who can write freely hath of the twenty-four letters of the alphabet and their infinite combinations (each of these being composed of lines), and would consequently be an accurate designer. I therefore endeavoured to habituate myself to the exercise of a sort of technical memory, and by repeating in my own mind the parts of which objects were composed, I could by degrees combine and put them down with my pencil. Thus with all the drawbacks which resulted from the circumstances I have mentioned, I had one material advantage over my competitors, viz., the early habit I thus acquired of retaining in my mind's eye, without coldly copying it on the spot, whatever I intended to imitate. Sometimes, but too seldom, I took the life for correcting the parts I had not perfectly enough remembered and then I transferred them to my compositions."

The biographers confirm this account of his methods, which the whole character of his art bears out. It contains in itself the master's protest against the pitiful helplessness of his compatriots. An imitativeness devoid of any sort of earnest purpose had found no antidote in the dull reproduction of Nature. Hogarth sought in his calling above all things a means of measuring himself against the world, and in his situation could only do this through a vigorous synthesis. He was of the kind, if not of the stock of Rubens.

His rhythm has many affinities with that of the Fleming. A century and the difference of race divide them. Hogarth has nothing of the royal manner of Marie de' Medici's painter. He was a bourgeois to the core in a bourgeois land, and lived in an age which was endeavouring to supersede the rhetoric of the seventeenth century. Quantitatively, therefore, he bears the same relation to Rubens as the contemporary Frenchmen. But his manner was more closely akin to that of the master. Something of the peasants in the Louvre *Kermesse*, of that very individual Rubens, lives in his scenes—reduced, of course, and seen through the temperament of the eighteenth century. We are conscious of the decorative rococo element even here, in spite of many a coarse detail. But his decorative gift is less fluid than that of the Frenchmen, and this gives him advantages greater than the countervailing disadvantages. His tougher manner, biting into us as with barbed hooks, makes the deeper impression, whereas we enjoy the pictures of the Watteau school like ripe fruits, melting in the mouth. He never quite loses the obstinacy of the self-taught artist, he seldom shows himself a virtuoso—when he does so it is to a degree almost unimaginable in an Englishman —and never goes without a remainder into the familiar rhythm of the age. He has a movement peculiar to himself—the dix-huitième siècle expressed in masculine terms. No Frenchman of the period painted a grotesque; the "heure du berger"

could not endure harsh contrasts. Beside Hogarth, the Frenchmen seem to have played always upon one string, leaving the rest of the instrument mute. Hogarth is a larger world, more objective, its outlook more from above. His laughter does not excite our responsive laughter, like the quirks of the jesters. He grasps more, because he feels more strongly, although at the first blush his emotion may seem to us only stronger hate. No Chardin or Fragonard could have painted certain things in his pictures more sweetly than he has done. But these are always tone among other tones, and the harsh shade beside them gives a richer variety. We always feel something of the freshness of a beginning, whereas there is a presage of the end in the sweetness of the alcove-painters.

This is true also in a wider sense. The analysis of art-history brings out many ingredients which seem to present the sharpest contrasts to our perception. Hogarth forces memory to jump from his contemporaries to such remote spirits as Breughel. He is akin to all the grotesque painters. Even during his lifetime his indebtedness to Jan Steen, Teniers, and Ostade, to say nothing of Callot, was recognised. But Breughel is the salt in Hogarth, a constituent which could not be replaced by a second name like the rest. Looking at the drunken woman on the stairs, dropping her child over the balustrade, in *Gin Lane*, we are reminded of Breughel's *Blind Men* and similar things. Details in *A Medley*, the scene in the church, might have been taken from a *Witches' Sabbath* by Breughel or Bosch. Such pages are to be found in all Hogarth's phases. *Gin Lane* was executed in 1751, *A Medley* ten years later, and even when the external resemblance vanishes we seem to recognise something of the fantastic Fleming's daring style in the whole manner of thought. And yet I do not know if Hogarth really knew Breughel. The affinity—if it can so be called—has no trace of archaism; the emotion fills the form to the very brim. It is quite possible that here we have merely similar conditions leading to similar results. In any case, this primitive basis is indispensable in the work. It gave the painter his firmness of structure, and prevented the satirist from losing himself in the non-plastic.

Satire was, indeed, positively an advantage to his art. It apparently repressed his artistic intentions only to distribute them the more happily in reality. When we first glance at his interiors we see only the scene. It entices us to find out what is going on there. But directly we get nearer the art takes us captive, and we scarcely note that our original curiosity is being led by the nose. The art manifests itself primarily as an astonishing suggestion of space. It is less in degree in the two earliest cycles, *A Harlot's Progress* and *The Rake's Progress*, the first of which is only complete in the engravings. The moral tale predominates here, the scene is more important than the room. In the little cabinet of the Soane Museum we can easily see how the painter's genius expanded, how it became more universal, more pictorial, in its progress from these pictures to the late *Election* series. On the other hand, there is a certain uncanny power in the details of the earlier works. The gesture not only speaks, but acts. In the sixth part of *The Rake's Progress*, the scene in the gaming-house, the furious gesture of the ruined spendthrift breaks through the colourless darkness like a magical light. The picture, like many of the others, has darkened very much, and was barbarically painted from the beginning. But it still affects us like a glimpse into half-fallen ruins, where details preserved by chance urge our thoughts to reconstruction. Slight as the indications are, they nevertheless give the self-absorption of each group with grim precision, their indifference to the fate of the prodigal, whose scream penetrates to us like the

echo of unseen forces. The primitive detail—primitive not intentionally, but because of the unity of the conception—adds to the effect here, as it so often does in Hogarth's works. The series reveals, further, much more tender gifts. The first picture, in which the young spendthrift makes his arrangements for the rosy future, foreshadows all the artist's future palette. The orange-brown coat of the tailor and his red cap nestle against the silvery grey and blue of the hero's open waistcoat. The blue is worked out in the spotted dress of the old woman, the strongest figure in the composition, and the young one, the "bed-maker's daughter," completes the harmony with her tender pink and yellow and her rich white. This bouquet of colour stands out brilliantly against the Velazquez-like brown of the walls. Hogarth's solicitude for the structure of his rooms can only be compared with that of the best Dutch painters of interiors.

Before such pictures we need a little patience. If we hurry past them, as is our wont in modern exhibitions, we might really note nothing but a painter of anecdotes. But if we linger for a few minutes a remarkable transformation takes place; the anecdote disappears behind the actual vehicles of charm. This is noticeable in all Hogarth's pictures. Only the consummate painting has survived of the biting satire *Calais Gate*, in the National Gallery, by which Hogarth took his revenge for his undeserved arrest in the year 1748, when he wished to go to France. We no longer know exactly what the huge joint of roast beef in the arms of the bony servitor means, but we are delighted by the textures of the meat and of the white cloths, and the juxtaposition of these details and the famished faces of the watch does not convey to us only the vague indication of the allusion, but a very definite impression of the flickering fantasy of the scene. Thus the story is not concentrated as the literary painter would concentrate it, but is generalised in a manner worthy of an artist. All that remains to suggest the origin of the picture is the figure of the painter in the background sketching the gate—an allusion to the cause of his arrest.

The consummate colour in the above-mentioned scene of *The Rake's Progress*, is not common to the whole series. Hogarth fulfilled the promise there given ten years later in the National Gallery masterpiece, the six-act cycle called *Marriage à la Mode*. The progress lies in the development of the palette and the elimination of all impertinent detail. If we include the first series, *A Harlot's Progress*, in the comparison, we are conscious of following the evolution of a primitive into a master of the most varied effects in a still higher degree. The expansion of the space that has taken place in the second of the *Progresses* is very considerable. The reduction of the strapping figures, which do not stand in any very convincing relation to their surroundings in the first series, gives a more rhythmic effect to the second. In the third, maturity of colour is added to the rest. This belongs solely to the painter, whereas the first two still betray Hogarth's beginnings as an engraver. The *Marriage à la Mode* dates from the painter's most prolific period, the time of his own portrait with the dog and the portrait of his sister, and shows the maximum of pictorial charm imaginable in this genre. We feel as if we were contemplating a diminutive fresco, so naturally is the vibration within the one frame carried on into the next, affecting us as the portion of a many-limbed whole, in which the development of the somewhat trivial story of a coquettish woman and a frivolous viveur plays no very important part. In spite of Hogarth's assertion that France did not possess any good colourist—the assertion which goaded Diderot to such a comical outbreak of wrath in his "Salon" of 1765—we

can only suggest the charm of these pictures by means of a French name, the same which Diderot exploited against Webb and Hogarth—Chardin. Not to compare the value of the one with that of the other. That which was the chief attraction of the quiet painter of the *Benedicite* was ill suited to the English dramatist, and what the latter possessed he owed not to Chardin, even though Chardin, as Diderot justly says, had earned the title of a great colourist long before Hogarth. We might call the six pictures of *Marriage à la Mode* dramatised episodes out of the same world which suggested the lyrics of Diderot's meditative friend. Chardin seems the freer of the two. His greater culture ensures his greater indifference to the fashionable standard. In these scenes, as a whole Hogarth is almost more dix-huitième siècle than the Frenchman. The rhythm which whispers faintly in *La Pourvoyeuse*, still sounds over-loudly in comparison in the tenderest pictures of the Englishman; but, on the other hand, it has a luxuriance which overflows the narrow confines of the frame. The difference increases on closer comparison. All is straight and simple with Chardin; he loves vertical lines, everything that gives the quietest movement to his veil of colour. In the documents of the author of "The Analysis of Beauty" the curve predominates. Everything is arched, and the colour is made up of winding chains. It is only in their total results that the palettes resemble each other from a distance, just as certain figures in the pictures of the two artists resemble each other, because they bear the same proportion to the rooms in which they are set. The genesis, however, is perfectly distinct. The interiors themselves have nothing in common, and the persons who inhabit them have perfectly different souls. In the one case they are animated, mercurial temperaments, in the other calm, contemplative figures. Chardin builds up the skeleton of his pictures with clear, well-organised colour-contrasts, and the flesh consists of vaporous veils drawn over the whole; the airy fabric is woven of microscopic diamond-splinters. Hogarth dresses his little figures as Rubens attires his Popes, and produces correlation by the accumulation of all kinds of materials. The singing fop in the toilette scene of *Marriage à la Mode* is royally arrayed. Such a minute detail as the trimming on the olive-grey sleeve, in which orange is interwoven with gleaming red and blue, seems—I know not how—to be taken from the vestments of the St. Liévin at Brussels, or some kindred example of Rubensesque splendour. The Countess has always a particular cachet. For the hair-dressing she wears a grayish pink skirt, partly concealed by the rich folds of an orange dressing-gown. An exquisite corset, gray with blue bows, supports her rounded bust, and over it falls the white toilette jacket, with its gray shadows. The mise-en-scène is made up of the thousand important nothings which furnish the existence of triflers. And yet these puppets live! This is the amazing part of it all—a life among powder-boxes! The Countess is no clothes-peg. Her face has the seductive animal freshness of the little lady who makes good use of her time. The granulated pink-and-white complexion, set off by the glossy brown hair, reveals energy in the pursuit of pleasure—a diabolical nervous energy. Even in the second picture, *Shortly after Marriage*, where her ladyship seems very cheerful beside the future cuckold, we divine that her activities will not confine themselves to details of dress, and we feel—I blush to acknowledge it—a guilty sympathy with her sweet audacity. Such a comprehensive individualisation of the eternal feminine on a small scale was undreamt of by Chardin. Guys was the first to give a similar impression.

It is easy to understand that an artist capable of thus extending the traditional

HOGARTH: MARRIAGE À LA MODE, THE TOILET SCENE
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

idea of beauty by virtue of his vital conceptions of the present had small respect for the pictorial wares of his contemporaries, and that once, in jesting reference to the exaggerated estimate of Italian pictures, he wrote: "That grand Venus—as you are pleased to call it—has not beauty enough for the character of an English cook-maid."* Hogarth's unconcealed aversion from Italy is no less interesting in the famous letter than the love of country which may be read between the lines. This ideal attitude towards his native land, manifested on every possible occasion, seems scarcely compatible with the mocking spirit that feared neither God nor man; yet it was not only the moral basis of the man, but the essential condition of his art. How these two characteristics harmonised without forcing the artist to compromise with the man is the key to Hogarth's psychology and to a true appreciation of his greatness—above all, of his art. For the fact that in his pictures mockery decked itself in beautiful colour and chose agreeable forms does not sufficiently explain the phenomenon. The logic of this combination remains to be discovered.

Hogarth's scenes are the utterances of a satirist who won monumental forms from the things he lashed. We have already noted the introspective attitude of the actors on his stage, the author's objective rendering. But this is not in itself the stylistic force of the pictures. It merely precludes insipidity of style, sentimentality of process, prevents what is injurious, but is not positively progressive. That Hogarth's pictures are not lampoons, but caricatures in the sense in which caricature may be called the basis of all great works of art, is not a result of the objectivity of analytical vision. But is this objectivity in Hogarth really so exclusively abstract, even in its obvious extent, as it would seem to be in a superficial formulation? In psychological terms, was Hogarth merely concerned to ridicule? The solution is not to be found in the smug morality of the zealous biographer, intent on human episodes. This is evanescent, and cannot examine conditions that were moral or immoral a hundred and fifty years ago by the standards of to-day. The idea that Hogarth's satire aimed at the reformation of those he satirised, even were it well-founded, could but turn us away from the penetrating recognition of that satire itself. We require instinctive confirmations. If we travel with Hogarth through the scenes of the *Marriage à la Mode* one thing, at any rate, seems hard to believe—that the creator of the society whose misdeeds he exposes so mercilessly stood entirely aloof therefrom. The details of his life which have come down to us throw no light on the point. The fact of material relation would not give us much information, and we know, indeed, that there can have been no question of this. But the man who called Garrick his best friend, the companion of Pope, whose caricaturist pencil was guided even in his youthful works by the lofty spirit which felt itself drawn to Milton, understood first before he hated. He fulfilled the postulate afterwards formulated by his countryman Carlyle—he saw. His perception pierced through the ludicrous kernel of things and beheld relative force and vitality even among the contemptible. The zealot who considered the ethical success of the popular series of engravings, *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, by which he hoped to inculcate mercy among his countrymen, a higher thing than the proud consciousness of having produced Raphael's cartoons, could not in his best works refrain from treating his

* In a letter said to have been written by Hogarth under the pseudonym "Britophil" to a London newspaper in 1737. Reprinted in extenso in John Nichols' "Genuine Works of William Hogarth, with Biographical Anecdotes" (London 1808–10).

victims with more tenderness than pedagogy demanded. He could not have given such seductive grace to the heroine of the *Marriage à la Mode*, even in the duel scene, where the wretched woman kneels in her chemise before her wounded husband, if he himself had been quite callous to her charm. Nor should we find such rare tones of the palette in the poor sinner's death-bed scene if the last word had been left to the moralist here. Of course, consciously he may have accepted the part which appears the most natural one. It brought him the facile satisfaction of the worthy citizen who is extolled by his intimates. But splendour remained beautiful to the painter even when it masked vice or absurdity. The frivolity of the upper classes must have been apparent to the healthy mind of this friend of the people in the fashion of the day, and Hogarth lost no opportunity of speaking his mind on this point. He succeeded best in his famous picture of the year 1742, *Taste in High Life*. Even here, where the moral tendency called for no restraint, where the theme is two old fools, whose puppet-figures could not stir any human emotion in any spectator, even here the decisive strain of Hogarth's subconsciousness mingles with his laughter. The work is by no means exhausted when we have recognised the comicality of the personages. Absurd as is the effect of the hooped skirt on that aged carcase, made up merely of paint and false hair, whose arabesqued hands belong rather to the face than to the body, idiotic as is her partner, to whom all existence, sex included, is compressed into the mechanism of a mincing gait, the ludicrous aspect of this monumental type of fashion-mania is not maintained before the greater complexity of sensations which it evokes, directly or indirectly, according to the degree of culture of the spectator. For it does not only condemn, though the ridiculous is present in every detail, even in the grotesque pictures on the walls. It has a positive side, though not in the popular manner, not by means of cheap personifications. We do not see "the good" side by side with "the bad," nor bring our examination to an end with a "quod erat demonstrandum." But the good is shown in the evil. The false grace which Hogarth condemns is counteracted by a grace which makes use of the same persons, the same gestures, and welds all the absurd details into a common gesture, which, because it is harmonious, lifts the soul to higher realms, far above those of morals. A microcosm becomes monumental, and after the evanescent wit has had its effect we still retain the permanence of a new form, caring nothing from what paradoxes it sprang. The movements of the two grimacing figures make up a magnificent arabesque. The monkey, which breaks the gigantic curve like a rosette, was not set in the foreground merely with a satiric intention, and in the second, I had almost said the third, female figure, even taking it as a detail, there is scarcely a breath of negation; or, rather, the breath that remains seems merely the spice of this piquant grace. Effeminacy was not merely satirised here. Out of the grotesqueness is evolved a charm which could only have been wrought by the capacity for objectivity of an artistic soul, and finally becomes so strong that we are conscious of titillation rather than of the scourge. Beardsley, who of all Englishmen owes most to the author of *Taste in High Life*, was the first to essay this kind of objectivity again, on a much smaller scale. Mutatis mutandis! The sphere of the late-born illustrator of "The Rape of the Lock" no longer required the strong difference between subject and object, and perhaps exaggerated his affection for the objects of his laughter, just as his predecessor had exaggerated his hatred. That which brought the two children of such different worlds together was a common sympathy. We are told that at

the age of twenty Hogarth began his artistic career with an engraving from the same poem of Pope's to which Beardsley owed one of his most exquisite fantasies.

But we must not lose ourselves in admiration of a single fruit of Hogarth's tree, which has perhaps a somewhat excessive attraction for us of to-day; we must not forget that it is only one of many. The subject of the last great cycle is a world apart from that of the earlier series. It is an electioneering campaign in four acts, the *Election* series. It dates from the year 1755, ten years after the marriage story, and twenty years after *The Rake's Progress*. Garrick bought it, and rejoiced in it to the last day of his life. It is now the great treasure of the Soane Museum, where it shares the same gloomy little cabinet which shelters *The Rake's Progress* and a variety of other things, useful and superfluous. It will be generally agreed that this cycle is the masterpiece of the versatile painter. Though it has nothing of the brilliant fin-de-siècle pleasantry of the pictures we have just been considering, it has retained what is best in these, the same playfully triumphant form. But here the victory implies the curbing of an inconceivable multitude of effects. To get a clear idea of this it would be necessary to see the pictures in a suitable room, where it would be possible to isolate each, and to look at them from a proper distance. To imagine the details we must recall Jan Steen's most grotesque types and kindred things. Faces of this kind swarm, and many a one shows a close resemblance to famous prototypes. In the first picture, for instance, *Entertainment* (the banquet to the electors), the fellow in the red jacket with the glass in his hand at the left-hand table, whose bestial joy draws the tongue out of his throat; or the monstrous old woman on the extreme left, who is making the spruce candidate pay for her political opinions in kind. This robust Dutch note does not appear for the first time in this final series. It is to be found here and there in many earlier pictures and engravings—the *Cockpit*, for instance—and even in the figure of Bambridge in the Assize picture of 1729, in the National Portrait Gallery. Sometimes we could believe that the heads had been taken directly out of small Dutch pictures and put into Hogarth's. But the way in which they are introduced is the remarkable thing. It might almost be asserted that Hogarth first found the right use for grotesque masks, which are often mere isolated monstrosities in the small Dutch pictures, by employing them as accents in his crowds of figures. The general effect is as unlike Jan Steen as possible; it is rather—rococo. A skipping rhythm, like a merry streamlet, gliding over all sorts of grotesque stones, which lie in all possible positions beneath the surface of its clear waters; perceptible in spite of its infinity of detail, always animated to the point of frenzy, and yet a single harmonious surface. A year earlier, in the *March to Finchley* of the Foundling Hospital, we see how Hogarth compelled repose. Without the recurrent red of the faces and uniforms the picture would fall to pieces. The perspective of the colours completes the arrangement, still somewhat arbitrary here. In the *Election* series this effect is multiplied. The colour becomes a net of innumerable meshes, which follows the movements of the composition, and the composition, for all the spontaneity of the impression, is so arranged that all the individual movements complete a main direction. In the *Entertainment* the brownish, granulated gray of the walls and tables gives a firm foundation for this play, which is necessarily much more reticent in colour than in line. Gray-blue shades predominate. The heads, heated to boiling-point by gluttony, may laugh, grin, and scream as boisterously as they will; the pervading reddish-gray tone binds them to

the quiet surface and before the uniform background into an ornament for the table, which stands like a rock in the hurly-burly of the elements. The more lively colour-contrasts appearing here and there are divided almost mathematically. Red appears in the background to the left in the red jacket of the lewd fellow with the glass, in the youth with the cask of the foreground, and to the right in the costume of the decrepit devourer of oysters; orange to the left in the flag, in the middle in the violoncello, to the right in the carnations of the old woman, &c. We never remark the scheme. Each of the four pictures is a world, a mood in itself, and yet a part of the same story. In the second act, *Canvassing for Votes*, where hard cash takes the place of wine and oysters, and greed is shown in all its stages from extreme hunger to satiety, the extraordinary energy of the central group with the farmer is only made possible by the repose of its surroundings. On the one side a voting paper is thrust suddenly under the farmer's nose, while on the other the host, crimson with persuasive energy, and almost bursting, sets forth the virtues of the rival candidate, the while the worthy man calmly pockets the chinking arguments of each. A conception becomes plastic form forthwith. Each of the three preserves the corporeal entity proper to him—even the spiritual elements are corporeal here—and at the same time the limbs of all three weave themselves into a new mass, a Laoköon in small. In the last two pictures of the series Hogarth enhances the fantastic character of his structural art, and again, as in the others, tones down the wildness of the composition by the mild scale of bluish-gray, orange, and brown. The scene of *The Polling*, with the swarm upon the steps, and the concentrated variety of individual scenes, is a charming, peaceful landscape, accompanying the uproar with gentle chords. We recognise what Wilson's friend might have become to the English school of landscape painting. *Chairing the Member* (the apotheosis) rises in my memory as a tumultuous wave of humanity. In the many-storeyed structure, with the fat candidate's arm-chair to crown it, each detail contributes to the rhythm, without detriment to its objective structure. If the boldness of Rubens and his followers, destroying a cosmos to build it up afresh, fills us with admiration, this citizen of a smaller world teaches us to appreciate the tough endurance which raises its pyramids with small stones.

Minuteness of structure was proper to Hogarth, as was also minuteness of material. The idea of a picture grew up in his mind from the sum of single observations, which he was able to seize and to co-ordinate. The converse method, to which his ambition sometimes urged him, the production of an idea independent of his daily sum of verifiable experience, was not so successful in his hands. He had already in his thirties attempted "what the puffers in books call the great style of history painting," the result being the two large pictures now in St. Bartholomew's Hospital, which he himself disparaged in later years, and not altogether without cause. Shortly before his fiftieth year, and between that and his sixtieth year, he returned to the charge, goaded by the patronising criticism which persisted in looking upon him as an outsider, and painted several large Scriptural subjects, even producing an altar-piece in 1756.* The *Moses before Pharaoh's Daughter*, in the Foundling Hospital, seems to me the most interesting of these essays. It is certainly the happiest of the many combinations with Rembrandt attempted by the England of the eighteenth century. We note with satisfaction in the old man to the left of the picture the translation of a veritable Rembrandtesque Jew into a new world, and in the Moses, with his yellowish-red carnations, a relation to the great

* A triptych for St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol. Now in the Fine Arts Academy, Clifton.

prototype, based upon an earnest comprehension of transmitted treasure. Comical as are the dignified periods in which Reynolds, of all people, stigmatised this departure of Hogarth's as a regrettable aberration,* even a juster optimism might deem them no fresh titles to fame for a master who had manifested so independent a conception of the world. But a more penetrating appreciation would find valuable indications of his personality in these works. Even the weaknesses of great men attest their strength. Here we will be content to note that in Hogarth's extensive life-work these disputable productions are quite insignificant numerically, even if we include among them the much-debated *Sigismunda*, the weakest work of his old age.

On the other hand, Hogarth has left abundant proof that his art did not require the " ridicule of life " to manifest its greatness. His portraits are unrivalled in the portrait-ridden art of England. Hogarth as a portrait painter forms a chapter of himself. I have referred the weakness of English painting to the fact that it was a form of luxury, designed, not to be a medium of expression for the artist, but to lend a pleasing elegance to the heads of the sitters. Hogarth was free from this vice. He is distinguished from his colleagues, not because he used other colours, because he was more or less skilful than they, but by his different conception of his calling. He saw in portraiture exactly what he saw in all other painting. He would only take people who amused him as his sitters. Art was not a business to him, but experience, the possibility of giving clear forms to the things that moved him. Hence the most striking quality in all his portraits is their inevitability. This inner quality is not to be replaced in any way, not because it suggests any particularly moral or sentimental reflections to us, but because it is the vehicle of that motive energy which alone urges the highest capacities of the artist to manifest themselves. There is scarcely one among the portraits that was not seen with all the painter's powers. This is at once apparent in the manner in which the people in his pictures fill the space. The *Lord Lovat*, of 1746, first sits in the arm-chair before he becomes decorative, and sits with all his sitting power. His physiognomy lies not only in the broad, intelligent face, but in the whole body, the exuberant fleshiness of which we divine under the folds of the coat, even in the thick hands with the calculating fingers. Nothing betrays the fact that this man was executed the day after Hogarth painted him. But the energetic vitality of the sitter, who had given the Government plenty of work, is emphasised in all its variety. Hogarth himself pronounced the *Captain Coram*, of 1739, in the Foundling Hospital (with its extraordinarily expressive face, kneaded with vigorous brush-strokes, and yet soft), his best portrait, because it revealed a certain affinity with the genre of the day, and triumphed by those methods which were common to Hogarth and his colleagues. The judgment seems to us somewhat extravagant now, not because we do not think the *Captain Coram* a fine work—it is almost unrivalled in its class—but because Hogarth is incomparably more individual in other portraits. I am thinking not so much of works that approximate to the specifically English sentiment of the day, such as the portraits of Garrick, Thornhill,

* "After this admirable artist had spent the greatest part of his life in an active, busy, and, we may add, successful attention to the ridicule of life, after he had invented a new species of dramatic painting, in which probably he will never be equalled . . . ; he very imprudently, or rather presumptuously, attempted the great historical style, for which his previous habits had by no means prepared him : he was indeed so entirely unacquainted with the principles of this style, that he was not even aware that any artificial preparation was at all necessary." [A Discourse, delivered to the Students etc. (London, 1789).]

and Pellet, evidences of the superiority of a natural instinct to the dexterity of the fashionable artist, or of the proud bearing of the little Duke of Cumberland in the late Sir Charles Tennant's collection, where within a very small space there are details which foreshadow Goya, but rather of certain female portraits, the *Miss Arnold* in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, and the glorious works in the National Gallery. These are imperishable documents of the most patrician English spirit, contemporary with the portraits of Reynolds' school, and so far above the best works of that circle that it is inconceivable why a country, simultaneously producing such distinct grades of artistic merit, should not have pronounced for the better of the two. Hogarth's woman is not the doll which the others endow with fine clothes and pretty gestures and insipid ideas. She speaks, works, bestirs herself before our eyes, expresses herself with all the instincts of her nature, with her temperament, her moods. The vivacity which could not accommodate itself to the didactic purpose of the social drama in *Marriage à la Mode* without showing the irrepressible freshness of the "cook-maid" in some form or other, bursts into luxuriant bloom in portraits which were painted only on its account. The portrait of his sister Ann is not only Hogarth's maturest work, but one of the most beautiful faces of the eighteenth century. In the dress a rare harmony is produced by the reddish-orange tones, rising to yellow and enframed in olive, the pink in the centre, and the white tones of the illuminated lace, with its vivid lightning lines. In spite of all this richness, the dress retains its airy, diaphanous character. We divine the vigorous contours of the body under the stuff. From out the laces grows the face, with its blooming mouth—in which the red becomes more intense, as in the mouths of Vermeer's girlish faces—its beaming eyes, and its rich brown hair, lighted by a final red. The wisdom of this colouring, on its dark green background, is as far above the frippery of the English fashion-painters as is the natural bloom of the skin above the "foreign aid" of the rouge-pot.

English as the result is, the means by which it is obtained are as un-English as possible. All unconsciously, this Gallophobe here approximates to the colour-culture of the land which was to produce a Delacroix. Of course, the extraordinary compactness of this mellow form was quite unknown in France at the time. It is only the logic of the colour-language which strikes us as French, because it was finally worked out in Paris, and not in England. I will not venture to say whether the many currents of influence that set from the one country to the other in the eighteenth century did not begin with Hogarth. The physiognomic element remains very distinctive. The head of the artist's sister is of the same stamp as his portrait of himself; there is a dual family likeness. It has the same fat handling, which never tends to resolve itself into colouristic vapour, but achieves vitality with granular precision. Style never seduced Hogarth into a lack of respect for his model. Just as in his popular scenes he notes the incident calmly in the midst of the utmost tumult, so in his portraits he is above all truthful, and places the necessity of creating human beings above the artist's desire to express himself in beautiful figures. The picture of his six servants in the National Gallery is a most remarkable document illustrating this principle. The absolutely pictorial relation of one to another, the desire to decorate the surface with six faces, does not prevent each head from looking as if only the endeavour to fix it as faithfully as might be on the canvas had set it by chance beside the rest. Each face reveals the technical treatment best suited to its character. The old man in the back row on the right seems to grow out of the material automatically like a Rembrandtesque face. Pink

HOGARTH: THE SHRIMP GIRL
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

and white mingle in the carnations, the eyebrows are rendered by a gentle stroke, the grey hair enframes the face and flows into the uniform background. Everything is soft, mild, and fluid, like the character behind the features. The man in the centre is utterly different. Here the firmer material, the stronger pink, the decided brown of the hair, and the more energetic touch harmonise with the more vivacious expression of the face, whose owner was undoubtedly the person of most authority in the circle. Despite this differentiation, which is no less pronounced in the female faces, the six belong unmistakably one to the other. They are, indeed, said to have been relations, and this interconnection is indicated with as much artistic variety as the individuality of each.

In the *Shrimp-Girl* Hogarth surpassed himself. Here for once the colourist cast aside all considerations of the versatility of the master's gifts, forgot precision in detail, and produced an impressionist work of the purest water under the stress of a happy inspiration. Fragonard himself rarely handled the brush more loosely. We scarcely remember that the creator of this indescribable face, which consists, not of nose, mouth, and eyes, but of a single mass of melting tones, lived in the eighteenth century. It was reserved for our age to throw down all the barriers between will and instrument, and to permit the immediate transmission of strong personal emotion to colour upon canvas. Yet Hogarth worked on these lines here. His strenuous cumulative industry vanished. An impulse, effectual as a single grasp, transformed the palette into a picture. The gray, brown, and pink tones run like undammed streams among one another, guarding the secret of their relation from inquiring eyes. The liquid eye has no more importance than any detail of the costume—a dress no tailor could have devised; it is a spot among other spots. No detail is clearly distinguishable, no detail is wanting in this vital creature, who stands before us, not only corporeally complete, but with the atmosphere in which she lived and still lives. Something in the attitude recalls Rubens, the exuberant freshness of the basket-bearer in the *Flight of Lot* in the Louvre. And here memory is not confined to the consciousness of having the reduced forms of a greater world before it, but, setting the impression beside the achievement of the great artist, sees therein a result of equal value, a realisation of the most secret of Rubens' ideas, and admires the same kind of energy in controlling swimming masses. In addition it is a typically English work. Of all the pictures that show us the London girl, this fresh and laughing face is the truest. It is the type of a race, like Rembrandt's *Cook*, or one of Corot's young girls, or a Madonna of Raphael's.

Hogarth also painted himself two or three times, and it is amazing that the craftsman who applied this vaporous technique to the *Shrimp-Girl* should have recorded what manner of man he was by such totally different means. He portrayed himself with his bull-dog and with a palette on which he drew the "line of beauty"—two emblems appropriate enough to the square face with its intellectual forehead. The painting is classic. The creation has nothing of the eighteenth century, but all the force and fervour of the great sixteenth and seventeenth century portraitists. Like these, he wanted to paint a face. Costume, the main preoccupation of his contemporaries, is a negligible quantity here; the reddish-brown coat over the black waistcoat served merely as a frame. But in the dog, whose tints are indispensable to the colour-scheme of the picture, the keen student of physiognomy reappears. Here, just as in the painter's own face, the brush yields all its richness to the touch. The dog belonged to the man, as does

the broad, elastic, yellowish-brown stroke of his shaggy coat to the dark harmony of the picture. The conception is more animal than that of the human countenance, where all that the coarser strokes express in the dog appears in delicate shades. Such symbolism was the language of the old masters. The modelling of the face recalls the greatest foreigner who ever painted in England. Hogarth seems to have been the only one who profited by him. In the little portrait of himself again, in the National Portrait Gallery, where Hogarth is seated at his easel to paint the Comic Muse, the plastic quality evokes Holbein.

This face makes us feel that the man who owned it had thoughts of his own about the world and his art. The things he had to say about art he set down in a book, which has met with the same scanty appreciation accorded to his pictures till the last few years. A book in which the bull-dog that lurked in Hogarth sometimes barks furiously, and perpetrates crude errors, such as those Diderot pilloried, yet, on the whole, one of the best works on art extant. Lessing was one of the few who read it with profit.* An artist's book, one-sided, as are all the theories of artists, and therefore good, for the one-sidedness of strong personalities always shows the road by which they have reached perfection, and contributes to our knowledge just as their art contributes to our enjoyment.

Hogarth thought the curve more beautiful than the straight line. The uncompromising nature of the dictum is disturbing. It is too just for acceptance. Every child can see that straight or crooked can be neither beautiful nor ugly in itself, for a single line in a work consisting of many is merely a fragment in the factors that make up beauty. The unit cannot be demonstrated concretely. Even in the simplest work it is not the detail reduced to a minimum which gives the result, but the use of parts for a whole, and the curved line may be just as beautiful or just as ugly in a given place as the straight. Had Hogarth contented himself with the setting down of this sentence the ridicule it excited would have been pardonable. But the sentence was put forward by superficial frivolity, which in Hogarth's time, as in our own, delights to take some paradox, easily refutable when divorced from its context, and to make this the excuse for throwing the book into the corner. As a fact, the two forms which Hogarth opposed one to the other were only symbols for different principles. The one, which he personified by the straight line, represented immobility ; the other, which he typified by the curve, stood for movement, as who should say death and life. He pointed out that art demands suitable differentiation, the richest possible development of all the latent motives in a subject, and the concentration of all this variety into a single rhythmical expression. This he insisted on, not only for linear composition, but also for colour, and was not content with his own art, but showed it in the other arts. The symbolisation of the problem by the simple form of a curved line was characteristic of an eighteenth-century master. He generalised a particular case which the whole organisation of his genius led him to look upon as universal. If we go back to the purpose of his conception we shall agree with him unreservedly. Though not always right in practice, he was essentially right in principle. Under the S-shaped line of the ornament on the title-page of the "Analysis of Beauty" is the word "variety." Referring to this in the chapter containing his unjust criticism of French painting, he says: "Upon the whole of this account we find that the utmost beauty of colouring depends on the great principle of varying by all the means of varying, and on the proper and artful union of that variety."

* "Laoköon."

Hogarth extended the significance of his axioms more by his own works than by the fund of brilliant observation with which he illustrated this leading axiom of creative æsthetics—experiments which already foreshadow that which first became familiar to men some hundred years later. His most distinguished variety lay herein—that he gave to each task the special form suited to it, and that he never repeated himself. The correlation of his works connotes an unparalleled versatility. Every one who passes from the first Progresses to the last series, from the engravings to the historical pictures, from the male to the female portraits, is filled with astonishment at their organic richness. He was an inventor, and more especially an inventor of forms. It was his own highest variation that he, the satirist, was not content to analyse the absurdities of his contemporaries, but followed after imperishable beauties.

After this demonstration we may well doubt whether Hogarth was in any degree the artist drawn for us by contemporary biographers, and those who followed them. It is certain that little more of the moralist remains than would furnish us with a biographical note of dubious interest. What he wanted—or, rather, what short-sighted commentators have supposed he wanted—bears no sort of proportion to what he achieved, and what he himself has written about it affirms his mistrust of such a petty conception. If it be true that his graver only enraged his contemporaries, or stimulated them morally, frightening the vicious and edifying the good, time has effaced the utilitarian character of his work, and all that remains of his hatred, which found such vigorous expression, is love. The change has taught us not only to know a new Hogarth, but some important facts about ourselves. The humanity which could only judge of such gifts by coarse anthropological standards led a different existence from that of our present, with its smiling indifference, its strange tranquillity, intent only on the beauty or ugliness of artistic action. It seems marvellous indeed that a preacher out of such a world could also be a great artist, leaving works behind him which after the lapse of centuries arouse greater enthusiasm than they evoked among his contemporaries; that the genius of art not only suffered the coexistence of a mental state which seems to us strangely circumscribed, but could even to a certain extent subordinate itself to this secondary force. Such phenomena are impossible in these days. Every artist of this age who should not resolutely reject the part gladly accepted by Hogarth would probably be shut out from all participation in the propagation of beauty. But the phenomenon really lies, not with Hogarth, but with us. He merely expressed in a particular form what was common to all the older art of our culture—the faculty for transposing strong, simple ideas, illuminating to every contemporary, into art. He spoke as all great creators have spoken to their compatriots, more or less intelligibly, never so far from the comprehension of the masses as an artist of his calibre would be to-day. The phenomenon lies perhaps rather herein, that we are able in these days to substitute abstractions for that far-reaching home-feeling which serves as impulse to the creative genius, that an all too feeble imagination suffices to give to forms the mighty speech that echoes through the ages, and that we no longer need the primitive purpose in order to sun ourselves in beauty. Hogarth was certainly an exceptional manifestation in the nation whose serious aspects he recorded; still more so in the art of his home, which looked upon the Muse as a venal handmaid. But how much more of an exception in normal humanity is the great artist of our own times, to whom what appeared abstract to his predecessors must present itself as concrete.

THE PORTRAIT MANUFACTURERS

We cannot imagine English art without the introduction Hogarth gave to English painting. It also determines the artistic tendency of the development. Hogarth was the first to declare war against the Continent. From the first noteworthy beginnings of English painting down to Whistler, whom I assign to the English school for reasons to be explained later, all the efforts of any moment have been directed to the problem propounded by Hogarth. The manner of each of his successors has been the outcome of his relation to the rococo. The problem was not merely an æsthetic one ; it shows, as in a mirror, the human attributes of the artists who dealt with it. The result, the emancipation from the rococo, is the highest title to fame of English painting, and the most decisive factor in the development of European art. It introduces the varied spectacle that unfolded itself in the nineteenth century.

Hogarth was first a man and then an artist. He depicted certain aspects of his nature in his art, sunned himself in its radiance, and was like a crystal in the light. There is no print, no sketch, no picture of his, in which the man does not speak to us. His was a sentiment that took these forms and was not taken by them. It still remains when we have seen the whole work, like the power of a nature element, which did all this, and could have done much more. When artists do not seem to us inexhaustible after their own fashion they are never great.

Hogarth's contemporary compatriots, even the greatest among them, were first "artistes" and afterwards men. Were they ever artists ? We use the word so glibly, applying it both to Rembrandt and to a bookbinder, using the same term to connote dexterity, industry, all that the intellect can accomplish by ideas, and genius, the mighty and inexplicable, to which dexterity, industry, intellect, and I know not what beside, are but as the fingers on the hand of a giant. Hogarth had the great inclination for and against the world. He felt the impulse to soar above the world, and to contemplate men and beasts, passions and vices, and himself into the bargain, with all his grave and comical, his fair and his ugly aspects, like a panorama painter. He, who was so firmly rooted in the earth, to whom a "cook-maid" was more than any "great Venus," who depicted nothing but what he believed he had seen in the flesh, was an idealist, a fantastic, a symbolist, everything by which we designate the man averse from gross realities.

The others were nothing of the sort. They laughed at his bad spelling. There is a whole literature touching the question whether he could write or not —he who, like Rembrandt, of whom the same things were said, had the gift of writing with pictures. They jeered at the technique of his scenes, which was not according to rule, and forgot that he was the man to find his own rules, strong enough to keep his pictures alive when those of his rivals should have perished. They had something he lacked, something that is still, as at the time of the *Marriage à la Mode*, more profitable than art—amenity. They had a courtesy that was lamb-like in contrast to his bull-doggedness, and yet never lost sight of

REYNOLDS: LAVINIA, COUNTESS SPENCER

EARL SPENCER'S COLLECTION

the necessity of looking after the beloved ego. They are further lauded for their taste. People praise an artist for his taste when there is nothing else to be said for him, and it would be blasphemy to insist on the quality in Hogarth. His taste was so supreme that it seems a very different thing from the gift of the others. With him it was a capacity for bringing the parts together rightly. It directs the work as the conductor directs the orchestra. It is not this quality which is lauded in the others. That which is called taste in Reynolds and his followers is not theirs, but that of the pretty things in their pictures. It is at most a power of selection, not creation, and means no more in art than in life—a question of tailoring. This is prominent in English painting of the present day, and causes English pictures to be, with few exceptions, shadowy compilations rather than human documents. It is identical with what is called brilliant in the popular portraits of the school. A mind which only contemplates, which does not sympathise with every phase of a personality, which does not live in the life of its creations, must perforce produce soulless things. Hence it is that all the brilliant painters from Reynolds to Lawrence, who were content with conventional analysis, seem like brutal materialists beside Hogarth, whom it is customary now, as in his lifetime, to describe as a clumsy barbarian in comparison with his aristocratic colleagues. That which pleases us at the first glance, that which we understand at once, is generally the outside shell only, like to the dress and manners of a person, and it needs art of our own to find out if it is hollow or if it contains a fruit. With Hogarth the shell was satire, and we could not wonder if other painters had renounced it and concentrated their ambitions purely upon form. Nay, they might even have stood higher for this reason. If we knew no more of Reynolds and Hogarth than that the one was a satirist and the other a painter, it would not be difficult to decide in favour of the more famous of the pair, for we should be right in placing the higher conception of art first. But such speculation is futile if we do not go to the concrete, and find out how far the satire went with the one and the painting with the other. I have tried to do the first of these in the preceding chapter. We have seen that Hogarth did not win the key to immortality by his wit and mockery. It was not with this spirit that he conquered his rivals, among whom there may have been many satirists more subtle than he, but with the conviction of a great artist, with the sacrificial courage which makes epic poets of caricaturists.

English painting of the eighteenth century owes its origin to Van Dyck, to name but the most decisive of manifold influences. Its good and its evil are alike traceable to Van Dyck. Even Hogarth, who set up Van Dyck's bust in his house—I am always tempted to wonder whether it was a caricature—took something from him; and that which pleased him in Van Dyck was not the worst part of the Flemish master. The others confined themselves to imitation of his artistic methods. Jabach, Van Dyck's travelled client, described to Despiles, the author of the "Cours de Peinture par Principe," how the painter proceeded in London after Charles I.'s favour had won the hearts of the Londoners for him:

"He gave the day and hour to persons who wished to be painted, and never worked for more than an hour at any one portrait, whether sketch or picture. At the stroke of the hour he rose, bowed to his sitter to signify that it was enough for that day, and proceeded to give the day and hour for the next sitting. While his assistant cleaned his brushes and set his new palette, the painter received the next person who had an appointment. In this manner he worked on

several portraits the same day with extraordinary rapidity. After he had made a slight sketch, he made his sitter take the pose he had decided upon, and in a quarter of an hour he drew the figure and costume in black and white on gray paper. . . . This sketch he handed to skilful assistants, who then painted in the dresses from the costumes themselves, which the clients sent to the studio at Van Dyck's request. After the assistants had got the draperies to the best of their ability, he worked over them lightly, and in a short time gave them the truth and art we admire in them. For the hands he had persons of both sexes in the house who served him as models."

It was less the reflection of the vigorous epoch on which Van Dyck had nourished his talent, and the relative power of his best pictures, than the wise economy of the man of business which became the recipe followed by Reynolds and his alumni. When we read accounts of the activities of Reynolds' studio we seem rather to be hearing of the clientèle of a fashionable dentist than the energy of an artist. Hogarth christened the practitioners of this method "portrait manufacturers." In essentials they were the same after him as before him. The evolution of English portrait painting was literally skin-deep. There is no distinctive difference between the relatively underrated methods of Kneller and those of his successors. Mannerism wears richer and more complex masks, but the face beneath them is the same. Of course culture had increased. It is not necessary to read the speeches of the first President of the Academy, the unctuous tone of which is so far removed from Hogarth's strongly spiced utterances and the incisive pronouncements of his theoretical subjectiveness, in order to recognise the respectable average of cultivation in Sir Joshua's circle. Each of his pictures reveals the same cultivation. If a preoccupation with lofty things is to be a criterion, we cannot refuse recognition to this whole period of English art. And a criterion it is, but not for the art of a whole period. This also profits undeniably by the efforts of great predecessors if it has the necessary intensity in its vision; in fact, it may almost be said that the epochs of art are distinguished in their achievements by the varying degrees of this intensity. This is the case, for instance, if we compare the English eighteenth century with the nineteenth. The fact that the former seems to us a relatively classic period comes only from the higher degree of attention which Reynolds and his pupils accorded to their masters. The essential difference is determined, not by change of exemplar, not by the circumstance that the older generation preferred the masters of colour, and that the Pre-Raphaelites went back to other artists, but by the fact that the relative intensity of the relation between art and artists in the eighteenth century, modest as it was, if taken absolutely, became very much weaker in the nineteenth century, relying more than ever before on externals. The fundamental error which Hogarth avoided, the sacrifice of personal sentiment to the taste of the connoisseur, was the decisive factor in the eighteenth century. The circumstance that artist and connoisseur were often united in one person, as in the case of Reynolds, makes this intelligible, but not less disastrous in its consequences. In every great artist there is, in addition to the complex suggestions of tradition, which reveal more or less distinctly on which predecessor he is founded, a primitive spirit—we have seen it plainly in Hogarth—which captivates us at once by its originality of outlook, and makes that which the artist has derived from others seem a part of his own world, not that of another. This is what we called the play of personality in Hogarth, the play of exuberant power, turning to art only because no other

medium offered equal possibilities of expression. It gives the spectator a conviction of necessity, which is essential to him if he would recognise what the artist offers him as no cultured pastime, but the highest effort of human idealism. This same conviction underlies our criterion of the beauty of pictures. Not that emotion must necessarily express itself in terms of art, but that no good work can arise without emotion. That which we approve as " right " in it, and acclaim as admirable with all the innumerable gradations of our illogical powers of expression, is always the result of an immediate and powerful relation of man—the creator—to his work. If this is lost, or even relaxed, if we but feel the preponderance of craftsmanship over emotion, the suggestive force disappears, and we shall have no difficulty in justifying our subjective distrust by objective recognition of the weaknesses of the work. It is very difficult to formulate this primitive defect, on which everything depends, for the standard to which we might refer has yet to be constructed. A scientific language fit to set forth this contest of opinions without lacunae does not exist as yet, and hence it is always easy for hostile opinion to pronounce logical conceptions mere arbitrary emanations of personality, and to dispose of the matter by the axiom that tastes differ. That the decision has no more to do with taste in this sense than with art does not prevent a constant repetition of such arguments.

The manufacturing character which Hogarth derided in his colleagues betrays itself even in the most important personality of the school. Even Gainsborough had not the power of the great portrayers of humanity, the penetrating eye to which everything essential in appearance is revealed, the ruthlessness in sacrificing everything superfluous to expression, which sometimes exasperated Hogarth's clients. He painted his portraits for the sake of a detail or a group of details, never forgot taste for elemental things and allowed a piece of stuff to become more vital than his picture. No one can, of course, fail to see the charm of the costumes in the *Mrs. Siddons* of the National Gallery, or the *Perdita* of the Wallace Collection. But this charm only excites a vain desire to see the costumes perhaps without their wearers, or the wearers without the costumes. Our desire is not at once stimulated and satisfied by the picture, but grows to a coarser avidity, which would fain materialise beyond the picture. Many of his groups against a hastily treated conventional landscape or a red curtain have the effect of scene painting. This would not be a defect if the decorative element in them exhausted the rhythm. But Gainsborough lacked the boldness for such treatment. He creates a compromise, and this produces fragments. Looking at the large group of the Baillie family, we can imagine that if the vast red drapery behind the group were to move the figures would dance with it, so much like a drop-scene is the whole. Atmosphere is sacrificed to harmony. But this harmony does not obtain throughout the picture. It is impossible to believe that the arm outstretched to offer flowers to the child belongs to the boy in blue, and the stability of the whole group is still more disquieting. Near this picture, in the vestibule of the National Gallery, hangs one of Champaigne's portraits of Richelieu. The crimson robe, the feudal expression of the face under the purple skull-cap, the admonitory gesture of the hand, leave no doubt of the superficial purpose of the picture. Yet I know no portrait of the English School in which representative character is so combined with solidity. No one would speak of Champaigne in the same breath with the great portraitists of the seventeenth century. But then he had not the intention of these great men, which

stimulated the ambition of the Englishmen ; he attempted less than they, and so achieved a good deal more. The gesture, to which he gave himself up deliberately, is appropriate ; no part of the picture disturbs the proposed harmony. Gainsborough's works lack this totality of harmonious impression. In the profile of his daughter in the National Gallery his pictorial power was concentrated by his affection for the sitter, and makes for the fusion of the work. But even here there are differences of treatment in the face, and in the fine passage with the hand, which disturb the harmony, and are due merely to a respect for convention. Yet even setting his landscapes aside, Gainsborough touches us far more deeply than his colleagues. In his portraits he has given us, not women, but a feminine essence that almost suggests life. His elegance does not rise merely from the fashion of the day, but from his discriminating feeling for all grace, and a manner which was the outcome of his own nature. We do not see the women he tried to create, but something of himself, which the others do not give us ; we feel something of his own tender fragility in the weakness of his forms, we can imagine what he was and what he would fain have been—a noble spirit, to whom all base things were foreign—and we do not suffer under the repellent impression of bold satisfaction with inadequacy which mars even the best works of the others for us. His taste did not, indeed, save him from failures, of which those in the Dulwich Gallery are not the worst examples. But he refrained from that criminal trifling with the great heritage of the past of which Reynolds was guilty. That which critics to this very day cannot forgive him, a certain superficiality of touch, apparent even in the official portraits of the two Cumberlands, or the royal portraits at Windsor, I am inclined to account a merit. It was a symptom of an independence of mind which was a check to materialism, and tends to soften the asperity of strictures upon the artist by convincing us of the generosity of the man.

This human element was conspicuously absent in Reynolds. He showed us perhaps what he thought of Rembrandt, Van Dyck, and the Italians ; but this he has told us in his " Discourses," and it was therefore unnecessary to paint pictures for the purpose. On the other hand, he makes it impossible for us to get an image of his personality that might add a fresh page to the art history which deals in human manifestations. That which he tells us of his predecessors is not that which seems to us most important. He is said to have destroyed a picture by Titian to discover the secret of its technique.* He was for ever confounding accident with cause, and attempted to reproduce the gestures of persons whose feelings were unknown to him. To see a costume painter in Van Dyck was a pardonable error. But Reynolds and his fellows took from Velazquez and Rembrandt what Van Dyck could have given them, and this was no error, but high treason. In the National Gallery hangs the famous *Banished Lord*, the most Rembrandtesque of Reynolds' works, painted in deep brown tones with a red drapery. A pendant may be found in the artist's own portrait, also in the National Gallery, or the one with spectacles, in Buckingham Palace. The first thought that occurs to us before these pictures involuntarily detracts from Rembrandt. Man is always most accessible to the baser instincts, and thus in this case what we first experience is an unexpected belittlement of the exemplar. We see with the eyes of the plagiarist without being conscious of the plagiarism, and, revising our estimate of Rembrandt, we submit that his art was, after all, perfectly simple, and that it is going rather too far to place him above all his compeers.

* Related " inter alia," by Feuillet De Conches in his " Histoire de l'Ecole Anglaise de Peinture."

REYNOLDS: WHITE THE PAVIOUR WITH A BEARD

EARL OF CREWE'S COLLECTION

The similarity is surprising indeed. Not only the typical colour, but the granular impasto is imitated, the porous flesh, the peculiar material. And, in addition, this imitation does not lack an air of spontaneity; it seems in some sense a continuation, and even an improvement. That which was incomprehensible in Rembrandt becomes quite natural here, as obvious as some effect of industrial art. The inexpressible becomes a simple affair. Fortunately the error is no less easy to correct than to make.

Reynolds resembles Rembrandt as the utterances of the phonograph resemble the human voice. He reproduced the Dutchman dramatically, but without drama. The *Banished Lord* is the most obvious melodrama. Rembrandt had no organs for such cheap stage effects. By drama I mean the spectacle of excited Nature that displays itself in every work of the unique master, the confluence of mighty streams which never rest; the conflict of dark forces which are never weary, the stormy action of all the elements of the work which carry us away and yet pour a divine peace into the soul. Reynolds painted with Rembrandt's colours. We may even find his touch reproduced here and there. But as applied by Reynolds, the touches seem to be marking time, so to speak. They achieve nothing. That which Sandrart singled out as Rembrandt's characteristic trait, that "he opened the eyes of all those who, according to custom, were rather dyers than painters," was lost again in Reynolds. We do not recognise the growth of the work of art, the treatment of its atoms, the development of a conception into a creation, which alone awake our belief in the beautiful, but there is an attempt to show the condition itself, the impression we can only prepare for ourselves. Thus the supposed advance on Rembrandt becomes a cheapening of the prototype; the most important elements disappear, and only a shadow remains.

No one can paint like Rembrandt, not because of his greatness, but because the reproduction of a constellation of such instincts is impossible. Approximations are conceivable, produced by glowing enthusiasm and an affinity of emotion. They have occurred often enough, and we have seen new values evolved thereby; indeed, all art history is built up on such elective affinities. But in such cases we shall always see the transmitted value appearing either as shell or germ of a new one, transformed by a new emotion, not impoverished, as in the case of Reynolds, but enriched. Thus through the rich texture of Hogarth's impulses we discover Rubens, and this discovery detracts from neither artist. Our affection for the great Fleming derives fresh nourishment from the testimony of a great successor, and the fact that he was capable of absorbing such a mighty prototype to the advantage of his art can but redound to Hogarth's credit. Reynolds also adds something to the heritage of the past, but something of a purely negative kind. Delacroix' admiration for the English School did not blind him to this negative aspect of their relation to the old masters so especially apparent in Reynolds, and it caused him—to his honour be it said—to deny Reynolds' title to mastery. He held that the Englishmen were content to imitate more particularly the disfigurements produced by time in their exemplars. "Ils ont cru en faisant des tableaux enfumés faire des tableaux vigoureux, ils ont imité le rembrunissement que le temps donne a tous les tableaux et surtout cet éclat factice que causent les dévernissages successifs qui rembrunissent certaines parties, en donnant aux autres un éclat qui n'était pas dans l'intention des maîtres." * Reynolds

* "Journal," iii. 70, 71. See also p. 377 for his criticism of Reynolds, Lawrence, and Turner.

exaggerated these supposed qualities of the old masters; he made the shadows round their star still denser, and helped on the destructive work of time —which only weaklings and sentimentalists suppose to have improved Rembrandt—by removing altogether treasures half concealed in the unpremeditated darkness. His portion in his prototype was therefore robbery. Not only did he add nothing, but he repaid the help he received by distortions.

This was the eventful part played by the famous protagonist. He dealt with Van Dyck as with Rembrandt—witness his portrait of *Two Gentlemen* in the National Gallery, and many others. He dealt in like fashion with the Italians, as we see in his *Death of Dido* at Buckingham Palace, his *Charity* at Oxford, his *Children with a Net* in the Alexander Henderson collection, &c. He it was above all others who introduced into the new art the evil practice of replacing the original work, the individuality of which demands the spectator's utmost powers of attention, by an agreeable feuilleton, with which the economical reader is much better pleased. He was a populariser in the worst sense, who is responsible for the enervation of English art, and the consequences of whose achievements are still undermining the health not of English art alone. The dismal false economy, which everywhere allows artists such as Lenbach to usurp the place of greater men, is due in no small measure to Reynolds and his school. It is true, no doubt, that the Dutch and Italian masters had their epigoni long before the time of Reynolds—pupils who imitated a master with or against his consent, or envious persons whose gall or whose greed was stirred by the rising star. Such base contemporary rivalries are unavoidable; and, large as they may loom in the biography of a hero, they are his concern, not ours, and are harmless in the main. Bandinelli may have destroyed Michelangelo's cartoon, and juggled away a few commissions from him. The injury was as a small stone in the life-path of the great man, and, like all else that was irksome, served to form the master who lives in our conception. But Reynolds attacked this conception with unequalled dexterity under a mask of reverence. He put a pale simulacrum in the place of the hero who should be a national hero in every land. The question as to whether he was conscious of his crime or not is of secondary importance. Even the by no means established contention that he at first attempted to make the great masters contribute to the formation of a native tradition cannot mitigate the fact that he was guilty of blasphemy against them. And just as he vulgarised the others, so did he trifle with himself. He turned his emotion to theatrical account. I know nothing more trivial than the famous *Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse* at Grosvenor House—or the monstrous replica in the Dulwich Gallery—the *Garrick between Comedy and Tragedy* in Lord Rothschild's collection, or the *Infant Hercules* in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg. A divine justice has decreed that dexterity, when not applied to a great task, has the effect of making triviality appear still more trivial. Hence it is that the mastery displayed in some of Reynolds' pictures cannot conceal the insignificance of his whole activity from a lover of art to whom the meaning of noble artists has been revealed. The skill in some of the portraits is, of course, extraordinary. Many of the portraits of Reynolds' friend Dr. Johnson have a startling intensity. We feel that they are not to be classed among the 150 annual works turned out by the painter, that they are the results of a concentration of the artist's will on an object that excited his deepest interest. But even here the creative method goes very little deeper. It treats the face as does a photographer when he is wise;

ROMNEY: PORTRAIT OF MISS RAMUS

HON. W. J. D. SMITH'S COLLECTION

that is to say, he places his model in the most natural position possible, and fixes all the peculiarities of the moment. As the face is an interesting one, the picture is interesting too; but it owes its charm not to the painter, but to Nature, and in comparison to this must always remain a mere counterfeit, an accidental condition rather than pulsing life. A great painter, on the other hand, knows how to suggest the many-sidedness of actual life by the organisation of his work, not by dealing exclusively with the details which produce a certain impression in Nature, details of which only a limited portion can be visible, but by creating a symbol which reinforces that which is offered to the eye. There are some interesting things among Reynolds' portraits of women too, which leave the triviality of a *Robinetta* far behind. There are seductive details in the *Perdita* and the *Mrs. Braddyl* in the Wallace Collection. The treatment of the powdered hair and of the muslin has great pictorial charm. But here, as in so many portraits of the school, the manner in which the face is rendered contradicts the rich handling of the accessories. The more exquisitely the stuffs are treated, the greater is the flatness and insipidity of the puppet masks. They often look like enlarged miniatures in garments by Velazquez. Velazquez too, especially in his portraits of children, often kept the faces quite smooth and loaded the impasto in the costumes. But with him this antithesis has the effect of an artistic method, because the complexion (to say nothing of the incomparable modelling which he veiled in vapourous bloom) gave exactly the tone which the constellation of all the values of the picture demands. With Reynolds, on the other hand, details play a part of their own. In the famous *Nelly O'Brien*, of the same collection, the pale pink silk drapery across the knees is treated with stupendous mastery; but this treatment is so little in harmony with the rest that the spectator cannot help feeling he is looking at the portrait of a quilt. Gainsborough's clumsinesses are avoided. Reynolds' bodies are never impossible, like those of his greater colleague. He had learnt to make a body credible according to rule. But many lesser men have mastered this academic science without approaching the sphere where warm interest in artistic things begins. Certain relations are observed in his colour. In the *Lord Heathfield* of the National Gallery the purple of the coat tinges the face; and in like manner the greenish blue of Lady Albemarle's dress—here again the centre of interest—throws its lustre on the pale face. Here and in many other cases we note what were indubitably deliberate artistic relations. But how poor are they all in comparison with the pretensions of these pictures! In all of them the colour dyes instead of animating. It does not spring forth from the face, like the perfume of a flower or the breath of a human being, but has been added to it from outside. Of course the relation given by Reynolds had to arise; it would have been impossible to leave such prominent details of colour without effect upon the rest; but, further than this, there should have been a much richer variation to justify the pretensions of these details and the whole tone of the work. In the girl of Rembrandt's *Susanna van Collen with her Daughter* in the Wallace Collection the tone of the face is closely related to the coppery tint of the dress, but it is at the same time perfectly independent in its action—to all appearances a natural quality of the flesh. And among the relations which the inquirer seeks in order to get nearer to the riddle of the effect, the one here disclosed, to which Reynolds confined himself, seems to have arisen accidentally, because it is lost among a hundred others. Yet how majestic is this simple work by the youthful Rembrandt, in

which his real gifts are barely indicated, when we compare it with the decorative nullities on the opposite wall!

Gainsborough and Reynolds are the limits between which the gradations of Romney, Hoppner, and Raeburn, down to Lawrence, the youthful prodigy of the school, disport themselves. Not one of them rose above the standard fixed by the moderation of their leader. Not one of them was able to cast off the title which Hogarth coined for them. They were less talented and less well descended than Gainsborough and less pernicious than Reynolds. Their ambition sank to the level of amiable costumiers. Their people laugh before they have faces, and are sentimental before they come to life. English art owes to them the peculiarity that in the eighteenth century it is represented with one exception solely by portraitists—a peculiarity shared by no other nation. Is this peculiarity an advantage? It might, of course, have been one. The necessity that forced a painter to exercise his gifts in a domain he shared with rivals was a cause of fruition in earlier years. Man, the image of God, was perhaps not inferior as a model to the saintly figures of the Church. But from the earliest times it has not been enough to have the right model. The history of art shows us that the indispensable vehicle of the beautiful is the depth of emotion which draws the artist to his model, the extent of his love or of his hate, an emotion strong enough to tear him loose from earth and set him to seek the ideal with his soul. This was lacking in these much-praised painters. Their biographies may be compiled from the scale of their prices. They were all cheap to begin with, and have become dear in course of time.

An art history confined to portraiture might have become the rarest of national histories. The portraits of great masters have taught us not a little from the fifteenth century onwards. Three centuries scarcely produced so many portraits as did the school of Sir Joshua in fifty years. And yet we should know little of England if we were to confine ourselves to that which her painters have told us. They contradict all just ideas of the manners of a people who have been in the van of European culture on a hundred serious questions. We like to think of the Englishman as a City tradesman, plain, practical, intent on realities, severely disciplined, precise, and we praise his honesty. We know his love of Nature, of a natural mode of life, of a home. He who has spent but one day in London among citizens, or in the country among country people, can divine the character of the nation, which permeates all circles, and is comparatively but slightly affected by those differences produced in other lands by the severance of work and social affairs. I am always astonished afresh by this fidelity of the Englishman to himself, which is so lacking in English art; and not only in the English art of the eighteenth century. Indeed, it almost seems as if insincerity had increased since the time of Reynolds, as if those dexterous artists who painted the mask of the eighteenth century had been at least more truthful than their successors in the nineteenth. An art that has turned its back resolutely upon life presents itself to us, made up not of flesh and blood, but of insipid ideas, dry books and feeble sensations. The great Shakespeare's fervour is not its exemplar. These pictures read like a book for bread-and-butter misses, or a romance for empty-headed ladies. We may fairly doubt whether the rational life makes for the culture of a people when art is looked upon as a thing apart from culture.

How much healthier, how much more honest and robust, does the frivolous dix-huitième siècle of the French appear when compared with the manifestations of the English costume-painters! Only in Greuze do we recognise the absurd

RAEBURN: MRS. JAMES CAMPBELL

MR. L. MUIRHEAD'S COLLECTION

qualities of the Englishmen, and he might be struck out of history altogether without affecting the picture. Watteau, Lancret, and Fragonard did not probe any great depths in their models. They treated them as their light-hearted age treated everything. Art was evolved from frivolous jests. Rembrandt and Velazquez would have found little favour. But there was method in this frivolity. It was genuine, and therefore, though lamentable for morality, prolific for art. People showed themselves as they were, not because they were perfect, but because it gave them pleasure to be what they were. Painting was the true child of its period, which thought as artists painted, and saw no necessity to be different, as long as the sun shone over the merriest of all kingdoms. Frivolity penetrated people through and through, and therefore was without sentimentality. Sentimentality was impossible, for reasons of taste. Everything had to be facile and pleasant—everything, not only "l'heure du berger." To represent light things lightly was art. Silk was not to crackle like paper, and flesh was not to look like china. Artists were sincere—sincere to the point of showing everything they thought beautiful, not from morality, but from love of beautiful things. And because their ideal was a healthy one it allowed of differentiation, and hence it was that they thought less of adorning their fair sitters than of adorning their pictures. The most significant works of the period are not portraits, but genre pictures, and these are truer likenesses than the English portraits. The Frenchman's superiority lay in his more logical acceptance of the spirit of the age. The individual is by no means heroic in his scenes, but he is free from the involuntary comicality of the English heroic attitude. We might even call him a puppet—which man really was in the mirror of this French conception of the world—and might recognise regretfully that this type did not wander upon the heights of humanity; but in spite of all this we shall be obliged to admit that the pictures which immortalised it were excellent.

WILSON AND GAINSBOROUGH

THE industry of the portrait manufacturers tended to keep not only Hogarth in the shade, but still more one of his friends, who might have come to the aid of English art from another side—Richard Wilson. It is pleasant to think that these two were friends. The fact tells us more than many biographical notices concerning the breadth of Hogarth's sympathies; and we are glad to find that, like him, Wilson had to bear the hostility of the others. Hogarth's biting satire saved him from the worst obstacles that might have been put in his path. In the case of Wilson this wise provision was lacking; no one feared the quiet dreamer. The consequence was that he had to reckon with hunger in his old age, notwithstanding his membership of the Academy. Reynolds had not even a condescending toleration for this colleague. Yet what Wilson practised was, as a fact, nothing more than that which the President of the Academy recommended to all his pupils, and carried on diligently himself—propaganda for the noble masters of the past. But the landscape painter strayed in the process into a totally neglected domain, that of Nature, and worked on more logical, less subtle, and therefore more human lines. A simple question of material had redeemed the plagiarism of the portrait-painters. They painted English ladies and gentlemen, and so put matters right. Whereas George III. returned the picture of Kew Gardens he had ordered from Wilson, on the ground that he had received, not a landscape in the Italian style, but an Italian landscape.

Wilson began as a portrait painter. His early essays show that he might have succeeded as well in this line as any of the others. He met Zuccarelli in Venice and Joseph Vernet in Rome. The latter decided him. His first works have much in common with those of Corot. What he lacked was continuity. This want compels us to be cautious in our judgment of what he offered us, even if we cannot but suppose that an instinct of community with his fellows, such as that which illuminated the path of Corot, might have helped Wilson further on his way. When he was dead patriotism attempted to make an English Claude of him. He still passes as such. John van Dyke says: "He translated Claude—that is, he Englished him—just as a century before Ruysdael had translated Salvator Rosa into idiomatic, even classic Dutch."* A somewhat audacious assertion. Wilson certainly translated Both † (in his large pictures) and Joseph Vernet (in his smaller works), artists who were themselves translators, but not after the fashion of a Ruysdael, in whom the prototype disappears completely. To have done like Ruysdael, Wilson must have been another personality, and the art language of England must have been a mightier one. No Germanic art of modern times has had strength enough to absorb classic forms. Wilson, indeed, never thought of any such thing. His temperament did not urge him on to the part of a great personality,

* "Old English Masters," Macmillan, London, 1902, p. 72.

† *Cf.* the landscape of the Van der Hoop Collection in the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum (No. 591), that of the Six Collection, that of the Hague (No. 21), etc.

R. WILSON: AN ITALIAN LAKE (THE WHITE PILGRIM)

for which his gifts would have been insufficient. He was a melodious musician, content to be played upon rather than to play himself. He had as little of Claude as possible. The crystalline structure of a cool harmony was foreign to his inmost nature. The quiet charm of Poussin's atmosphere was more attractive to him. Sir George Beaumont, that bad painter and discriminating collector, understood the relation when he grouped the works of his countryman—unfortunately not the best —with their prototype, the exquisite little *Phocion* landscape, bequeathing them finally to the State. This unpretentious little creation of the great Frenchman's, in which the sonorous rhyme of the ideal figures is still banished to the twilight woods and only the innocence of untouched Nature appears, contains the world in which Wilson was happiest. He was never successful on a large canvas or with lively action. When he ventures upon episode, as in the *Destruction of Niobe's Children*, he is insupportable, and presages the worst aberrations of the English School. When he leaves his small composition, he becomes more confused than Dughet in his worst pictures. His material is like a thin veil which one dare not expose to the four winds of heaven. It is the same thing with him and with all his French and Dutch colleagues of the same class. But when he restricts himself and stretches his veil within narrow bounds, taking care to give it points of support enough, here a bit of ruin, there a tree or two, in the background the pleasant outline of a mountain chain, he achieves that refreshing charm of quiet pictures which seem to shroud our nerves in down and pour contentment into our souls. On these lines he sometimes (as in the small landscape at the Berlin Gallery) attains a structure of the arabesque far beyond the Dutch and French eclectics, and suggesting the fruition of Dutch art rather than the decadence of the eighteenth century. He was certainly no colossal genius, no original with lightning lyre, but an imitative poet, who never concealed his sources of inspiration. Yet an aristocratic figure, incapable of disguise, who allowed his origin to be plainly seen, and who chose his method, not out of ignoble speculation, but because it harmonised with his most intimate nature. The difference between Wilson's manner and that of his portrait-painting contemporaries is no gradation, but the far-reaching difference between a lofty and a vulgar mind which is manifest even where there is similarity of attitude. The youthful Delacroix once wrote to a friend, touching the difference between good and bad artists, that "les bons sont les vrais sages, ceux qui jouissent innocemment de leur âme et de leurs facultés ; les mauvais sont des fous, heureux de leur marotte et qui ne sont pas plus à plaindre que ceux qui vendent leur temps et leur conscience aux folies des autres." *

The practical result was that Wilson succeeded by his method in establishing certain fundamental elements of landscape painting. His emotion was so sincere that it could not fail to prove the validity of its conception when it had a problem before it to be overcome by its power. He showed by simple means what air means in landscape, and the possibilities of organisation by well constructed planes, indicated the degradation of colours, and above all the stylistic results of illumination. And so convincing was his simple manner that he succeeded, without suspecting it himself, in sowing the seed of a fruitful and far-reaching development in an artistically barren land, and in an art prematurely given over to a contemptible egotism. The despised starveling became the founder of a school, which was to leave the brilliant plunder of the portrait manufacturers far behind it. He, who was never forgiven for his love for the country

* "Lettres," Paris, Quantin, pp. 57, 58.

beyond the Alps which had given him knowledge, taught his successors to work with their own organs.

Gainsborough seconded him here, appearing in a very different light from that in which he figured among the portrait painters. He confessed himself that he painted portraits for gain and landscapes for his pleasure, and the difference of incentive makes itself very plainly felt in his pictures. As a landscape painter he shows little of his quality as a portrait painter, his dexterity in detail, his grace and splendour of bearing, even his lightness of handling. A laborious, struggling spirit presides over the palette, tormenting himself with dark, unruly colours, which threaten to veil the picture in colourless night. But his landscapes have something that his portraits lack—physiognomies. They speak to us in human tones, and we listen with greater pleasure to the stammering sentences of his emotion than to his smooth, insignificant phrases. An unwonted gravity informs the words. We learn to know the sensitive being who loved music so passionately. In all his portraits, it is true, there is a breath of melancholy, but in these it is more a final adjunct to the toilette, proper rather to the genre than to the painter. Here, on the other hand, the artist's soul stirs. It may be urged that sensibility in a landscape is in itself more agreeable than in a portrait, and that the mere change of genre is refreshing after the many sentimental portraits of the English School. But what we call sentimental in the disparaging sense is scarcely perceptible in Gainsborough's portraits. He had too much taste and distinction to fall into the snare to which Reynolds' coarser manner so readily succumbed. He was more rococo than the people he represented; and his superiority appears in this, that something of the same essence came from him and from Watteau. He made style, and this not merely as a portrait painter. We might speak of Gainsborough landscapes just as people speak of Gainsborough hats. There is the same curve in each. The brown foliage is sketched with the same rococo slightness as the backgrounds of the famous portraits, where the trees serve the same purpose as the wings on the stage. But the relation of the whole to the details has undergone a complete change in the landscapes. Not only the foliage, but the whole picture obeys a more vigorous impulse, and the sensibility therein owes its origin to a stronger development of the personality. Though echoes of the rococo mingle with both genres, they no more resemble one another than a Wilson resembles a Boucher. In the one the rococo is the final aim of the creator, in the other the accidental ornament of the age. Here not only is it non-essential, but it appears as the antithetical element, against which the personality of the artist is fighting. That we can see the struggle is a merit in Gainsborough's landscapes, which is not discounted by the impression that he was not always the victor in the contest, that he did not always succeed in presenting his scene with the relative finality of his portraits. The portraitist only got completeness by taking his task lightly. Others showed that a superficial completeness was to be achieved with even inferior pretensions.

Gainsborough began his artistic career with landscapes, before he had seen Van Dyck. Dutch prototypes are mentioned, Wynants in particular. All those other artists who had affinities with Wilson might be included. But I think he copied Nature more even than these, yet after the manner of a young man, who looks upon Nature not as a whole, but in detail. He said himself when he wandered through the Suffolk lanes, a youth not twenty years old, that there was "no picturesque clump of trees, nor even a single tree of any beauty, no, nor hedgerow,

GAINSBOROUGH: CORNARD WOOD (1752–54)
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

stem, nor post," in his home which he did not know by heart. These details he brought together in pictures, in which Wynants' convention helped him. We have such compilations in the landscape of the Dublin Gallery and the typical work of his early period, the *Great Cornard Wood* of the National Gallery, both painted before 1750, when Gainsborough was yet in his teens. The latter is not a wood, but an assemblage of well-studied trees, not one picture, but at least two, one of which, the larger left half, has much beauty. The high tones enhance the want of unity. The work resembles Wilson as far as the first essay of an awkward, self-taught youth could resemble a refined eclectic. Another difference is the absence of Italian reminiscences. Gainsborough never visited Italy. This was a disadvantage, for to this was perhaps due his inability to work with planes. It was an advantage, since it saved him from the seductions that led Wilson astray. If he did not succeed in accomplishing the development of his *Cornard Wood* into his *Market Cart* by the help of purely native tradition—and how could he have done so with the tradition of his native land ?—he at least kept within the limits proper to him, and solved the problem as a Northerner, in the only fashion which his compatriots could work out further. The Italian sun cannot be transposed to England. It is not true that Wilson anglicised Claude, but it may truly be said that Gainsborough made Wilson an Englishman. He eliminated what was ascribed to Claude, not merely by replacing Wilson's Bayaderes and dreamy pilgrims of southern origin by native figures, but by a modification of the scenery itself due to observation of English landscape. The National Gallery contains all the important documents of this development. The line is not quite stable, it makes various curves, because it arose from almost heterogeneous impulses; and we are the less able to trace it definitely because the dates of very few of the pictures are known. The little view of Dedham with the wood in the foreground and the glimpse of the church nestling among the trees of the background is one of the culminating-points. Beside the best Wilson it is as Nature to construction; and yet I am inclined to see more charm in Wilson's slight but truly poetical structure than is customary out of England. The relation between the two is obvious; the road to the little *Landscape with Figures* of the older man, where girls are undressing to bathe in a sunny lake, or the charming perspective with the ruin in the foreground and the inevitable tower in the middle distance, is easy to follow.* And whereas Wilson's delicate poems arouse our subtlest emotions, after the manner of certain modern English poems, which are merely rhythm and melody, and achieve beauty not by what they offer but by what they conceal, we feel an intimate sympathy before Gainsborough's *Dedham*. Even the foreigner seems to hear echoes of home, so strong is the love of the soil expressed in the little picture. And this is not merely the sentimental effect produced by the "good, kindly, happy man" of whose pictures Constable wrote: "On looking at them we find tears in our eyes and know not what brings them." All Wilson's delicacy is retained here, the delicacy which distributes emotion in subtle channels, and is not content with the coarse excitement of sensational feeling. Gainsborough attempted to strengthen this sublimated effect under the influence of Rembrandt. It was natural that the tender Wilson could not withstand this rivalry, and that Gainsborough declared himself more and more strongly for the great Dutchman. A greater artist would not have been able to bring two such opposite

* National Gallery, Nos. 1290 and 301.

worlds into equilibrium. Rembrandt gave Gainsborough consolidation of colour. He taught him to manage large masses. But it cannot be denied that the disadvantages outweighed the obligations. Gainsborough was alien to the whole nature of the Rembrandtesque conception. His light-hearted merriment and his superficial melancholy had no organs for Rembrandt's fervour, and the gentle dreamer who was very capable of ennobling Wilson was caught a helpless captive in the net of the strongest personality of the seventeenth century. The examples most accessible to him may have been harmful to him. Although he by no means shared the general enthusiasm for Sir Joshua, he could not altogether resist the suggestion of the supposed help his colleague had received from the old masters, and neither Reynolds nor any other contemporary could show him how to modify what he imitated. His borrowing resembles that of the rest in so far as he was content with a generalisation of the prototype. The great difference was that he had no speculative aims. He was not only too honest, but too unskilful. The question is not purely one of moral considerations, but has an important bearing on the æsthetic result. For as a fact he gave us much more of Rembrandt than his infinitely more dexterous rival, and this because—paradoxical as it may seem—he had less affinity with Rembrandt. Reynolds had a far truer comprehension of the technique of his exemplar; he appeared desirous of maintaining the same diversity, complicated his pose thereby, and made it almost impossible for his contemporaries to recognise the genuineness of his whole conception. Even the extravagant patriotism of his own countrymen could not compare Gainsborough's landscapes with Rembrandt's pictures without being convinced of the natural difference of their respective powers; but these landscapes show in a very primitive degree the same clear-sighted and elementary harmony of the author's emotion with the chosen form which is peculiar to Rembrandt's pictures. He painted thus, not because he had perceived the effect this manner had upon the public—the cold reception accorded to his landscapes would soon have taught him better; not because, like Reynolds, he had mastered this and many other forms of imitation, but because this manner alone seemed to him natural and rational. He understood Rembrandt with the whole strength of his enthusiasm, but he understood him after the fashion of one who nevertheless remained himself, of one who was temperamentally a rococo artist, the absolute antithesis of Rembrandt.

Before we can either do justice to Gainsborough himself or understand the consequences of his art we must probe the psychological depths of this problem. We must admit that the difference between Rembrandt and Reynolds lowers the imitator, and that Gainsborough's shortcomings in the same path are of a purer, a more tragic kind. It was no lack of intelligence that hampered Gainsborough, but the difference between individuality and surroundings. He shared the experience of many in these days, that the natural possibilities of development are denied to knowledge and to will. He desired to practise a great free art, in which personality is the dominant force, and remained fettered by all the dainty bonds which the author of the *Blue Boy* owed to his successes. Reynolds was the more modern of the two. Nothing bound him to the soil, not even the rococo, for he shook this off when he pleased. He was the forerunner of the many who belong to no age, who practise art to-day, just as they practise something else to-morrow, the ruthless, unfeeling egotists, individualists, but not after the manner of the great personalities who offer the divine gift of their being to art.

GAINSBOROUGH: THE MALL

SIR A. NEELD'S COLLECTION.

The weaknesses of the landscapes are obvious. Gainsborough saw only the shadows round Rembrandt's illumination, and under-estimated the glow that gleams through the darkness. He sought out an opening in a wood where cows come to drink, or a cart with gaily clad figures fills up the forest path, and round these he poured deep shadow. The process produces finely illuminated groups, but a vast proportion of the picture is squandered to form a frame. His yearning for unity of expression drove him to stake his all on a single card, the contrast of this central motive with the surrounding shadows. He overlooked the fact that as in Nature the value of unity depends only on the many-sidedness of the effects, so art can only achieve the richness of its original by the manifold aspects of effects directed to a single end. He lacked Hogarth's variety. This beauty has already caused a material deterioration in many of his pictures. The effect of the landscape in the Diploma Gallery has been practically destroyed by the black masses in the middle and on either side. There are worse examples still, which look like asphalted surfaces with spots of light here and there. Bad pigment is not solely to blame. It is as if Nature were avenging the false economy of art. She destroys all that is not held together by a thousand threads.

Gainsborough the landscape painter had obviously to pay the debts of Gainsborough the portraitist. The disproportionate emphasis bestowed on the central motive was due to the perverse conception of the portrait painter, who made a distinction between figure and scenery, and only preserved himself from the same results in this genre by the hasty treatment of the whole. Had Gainsborough given himself up as unconsciously to his temperament in portraits, had he not contented himself with a splendour restricted to costume in his creations, the tragedy would have made itself felt just as keenly here. The gamut of his artistic means obeyed only his dallying mood. How weak it was is shown clearly enough thereby. In addition to this, the large scale of his pictures told against him. It is not an accident that Gainsborough's smallest landscapes are his best. His sketches and studies are greatly superior to his pictures. We see Gainsborough at his best in the British Museum, not in the National Gallery. In the Arthur Kay collection there are landscapes of a vaporous delicacy, in which the swift chalk has fixed every gradation of the atmosphere. The figures in these sheets are no compact, isolated portraits, but a portion, subordinated to rhythm, of the whole, combined with the landscape by relations intangible as air. Nothing could be more fluid, more supple, than those brilliant little water-colours, which Constable and Turner never wearied of studying. Cheramy of Paris owns a fascinating example, two riders on white horses in an undulating landscape. It seems compounded of light and air, all in a single pale golden tone, and yet we feel as if we were with the riders on the wide plain, and could see all that they see.

I would give all the *Mrs. Siddons* gladly for one or two studies of English servant-maids and peasant girls by Gainsborough, though I am quite alive to the many agreeable things I should have to renounce in the exchange. Of course these studies have not the decorative quality which furnishes the wall of a room. They lack the magnificence of the stately ladies, before whom the spectator has the agreeable sense of having been invited to visit wealthy acquaintances. But the exchange would be neither more nor less reckless than that of the most magnificent screen from Old Nippon for a perfect small drawing by Rembrandt, and no one would hesitate who cares more for purely spontaneous poetry than for the

most dexterous routine work. It is only in these sheets that Gainsborough rises to the level of the old masters, and only before them may we cite without blasphemy those illustrious names with which the praises of the most commonplace works are interlarded in English art-literature. In his landscapes we are never reminded of the master whom Gainsborough followed. It is a significant fact that not one of Gainsborough's successful drawings reminds us of Rembrandt, though the shadow of Rubens rises behind them—that same Rubens whom Hogarth shows us. Here again, as with the author of the *Progresses*, the mighty shadow creeps into the line of the descendant, and Gainsborough also shows a diminutive of the giant's features. We seem to find the same things in a small world under different symbols; a tributary of that broad stream, not mighty, but charming with its pleasant windings between lower, closer banks. Art is humanity on a higher plane. In artists as in men we love not only what is peculiar to them, but that which ennobles their idiosyncrasy. This nobility comes from concentration. But such concentration does not inhere in all individual effort. It must spring from the nature of the particularity, and express an emotion which ensures the best use of gifts, making them beautiful. No contortions will serve it. Artists are leapers, not rope-dancers. Only when a work is the outcome of perfect harmony between its creator and his form of expression does it become art. This harmony is no more coexistent with the gift than is a wise use of our senses vouchsafed us together with them. It must be invented; and not only the temperament and qualities of the subject, but also the artist's surroundings may help or hinder him in the process. In the case of soft transitional natures like that of Gainsborough, in which extreme tenderness is allied to sanguine enthusiasm, a vast deal depends upon the circumstances under which they spend their lives. Imagine Corot, another painter who excelled both in landscape and portraiture, in an art nourished upon official portraits, and among people who only react to crudely emphasised effects! Would he have had courage for his fragility, the endurance to transform this fragility into the strength of his later work, amidst the Rembrandtesque greatness of which we can still trace the loose touch of the dreamer? Would he have had the incredible capacity to become vigorous and at the same time to retain the tenderness of his native gift?

We must think of all these circumstances if we would be just to Gainsborough. It was not the best works of this generous artist which were prized by the purchasers of his pictures, and had he appeared only with these, shown himself in his true aspect, that is to say, he would hardly have escaped the fate of Wilson. When he died most of his landscapes were still hanging in his own studio, or on the walls of his intimate friends. The prodigal presented a good many to the carrier who used to take his pictures from Bath to London. He gave away a famous work in return for a solo on the violin. Nothing was more salutary for English art than the spectacle of such generosity. Among all the money-makers, big and little, here was one who gave with eager hands, who loved to give, and was not engulfed in the plutocratic tradition of the land. His will went beyond what he gave, and had a far-reaching influence for good. Gainsborough's service to the art of his country is not so much that since him England has known good landscapes, as that since him sincerity to a personal conviction has gained ground. Wilson's comrade had unconsciously become the representative of an anti-Wilsonian tendency. The painter of *Great Cornard Wood* and the painter of the *Market Cart* were equally well disposed to their fore-runner. The transformation

GAINSBOROUGH: STUDY FOR A PORTRAIT (1760)

J. P. HESELTINE'S COLLECTION

had taken place without any dramatic reaction, and, as we have indicated, it scarcely touched Gainsborough's actual nature. It was otherwise with his contemporaries. English art was not capable of making such an objective choice as the universalism of Holland at the time of Vermeer. A very ripe culture was required to combine the heritage of Vermeer's great teacher with the purest reflection of sunny Italy. Gainsborough's successors had to declare for the one or the other. The choice was a matter of course, as soon as the latent worth of the two conceptions was taken into consideration. A venerated artist only begins to exercise a real influence by his works some hundred years after his death. During his lifetime admiration will place the ideal in advance of the actual achievement even in the case of an exemplar absolutely free from all didactic purpose, and build principles from what the creator himself refrained from formulating. In this case it was a choice between English art and eclecticism. The decision, which was not solely due to patriotism, was not unmindful that Wilson's conception of the world rested on a weak foundation, and that his art was an exceptional case, only successful as long as it was kept within narrow bounds. Gainsborough, on the other hand, was so familiar to the youth of England, and his purpose so convincing, that down to the present day there has been no serious critical examination of his work, though within the last ten years his real importance as compared with Reynolds has come to be recognised. And on the whole, this is well. Gainsborough is one of those artists whose very weaknesses are fruitful, because their whole lives, with all their purposes, are so transparent that even the least keen-sighted can see where the result requires completion. The defects of such masters stimulate to effort no less than the virtues of others. Thus Gainsborough, not Wilson, became the leader. History has confirmed the choice, and if the excellence of successors pleads for the prototype Gainsborough achieved a great deal. A good deal of brown sauce came into the English School through him, and many others less agreeable than Old Crome used it. The idea that the light of the great Dutchman might be approached in shadow cost many pictures, even after Gainsborough's death. But though a foreigner cannot share the over-estimation of the school which produced so many hands and so few heads, no one can refuse respect to the remarkable pictorial level achieved by this landscape painter. It was from this level that the greatest Englishman since Hogarth, Constable, was able to advance. The first master of the new florescence of European painting was a pure fruit of English ground. There is not an iota of Wilson to be found in his work. I shall try to show how it was only by holding aloof from all eclecticism that he did the bold deed to which contemporary England owes her finest pictures, and modern painting throughout the world its most stimulating impetus. There were exceptions who sought another road, and remained nearer to Wilson. They afford the negative counter-test. Even the dazzling apparition of Turner does not prove Gainsborough to have been in the wrong when he saw future salvation in the woods of his home, and in a simple native speech.

TURNER

THE exceptional character of Turner's whole existence contributed in no slight degree to his prestige. In a circle of simple people, whose ideas are of a very obvious description, the unusual person, who is not so easily understood, soon gains the ascendency. Compared with Turner's complexity, Old Crome takes on a bourgeois touch and Constable becomes coarse. The sentimentality of Morland, who watered down Gainsborough's idyls, and repeated himself ad nauseam, gradually became transparent, and failed to satisfy subtler requirements, and this sentimentality makes us so suspicious that we are apt to overlook the qualities of a Wilkie. Such pictures as Wilkie's *Spanish Girl* in the Tennant collection reveal an admirable colourist, and his productions with the painter's natural implement, the brush, ensure him a place of honour in European painting. It is due to the motives of his best-known pictures that this place is not yet freely accorded him on the Continent. Beside all these people Turner appears a phenomenon. When we enter the last of the rooms devoted to the English School at the National Gallery we seem to lack any standard by which to judge of his manner. After the placid pictures of his contemporaries we are not prepared for what we find here. The effect is that of a magical apotheosis concluding some harmless and by no means imaginative story. The others show us a gentle twilight of grays and browns ; Turner blazes forth in fiery enchantment. On the one hand, cheerful amenity or meditative dignity, and even when the drama is in a grave key a consolatory indication of a happy ending ; on the other, feverish excitement, violent haste even in the idyl, breaking all bounds in drama, not English, not French, but exotic, although it is impossible to say to what strange zone such colour and such images belong. There are, indeed, allusions to ancient things. Fragments of mythology are revealed through clouds illumined by lightning flashes. But these sign-posts serve but to increase our bewilderment, for we see them in conjunction with things which destroy their accustomed meaning and give them the aspects of ghosts running about in broad daylight. When we seem to be examining a scene from the "Odyssey" we hear cannon-shots. The fireworks of a modern city are let off against the sky of Arcady under the title of *A Night in Venice*. We know not whether in the turmoil of winds raised by a snowstorm or a simoom, Hannibal, the wreck of a steamer, or the threatening fist of Polyphemus will appear. The atmosphere of modern London shrouds the gesture of the Hesperides, and near a valley where nymphs are dancing races an express train, a new dragon Ladon with the eyes of a real locomotive. Here indeed was material enough for excitement. Turner's age has no other example of such eccentricities, still less the ages before him, even if we search through the whole span to the first dawn of art. The most striking phenomena of the late Renaissance shrink to the semblance of harmless jests. The whole of Japanese art is not so strange as the fantasy of this one man, and all the Greeks and Romans had not so many ideas as had Turner in a single day. It was reserved

for our age, which achieves everything, to produce artists just as remarkable. Next year may provide us with a spirit whose versatility shall throw Turner into the shade. For who will venture to determine the boundaries of this development ? We can more surely surmise how many chemical elements will draw man's spirit to the light as how many worlds of thought we have still to expect from painters and sculptors.

Turner's beginnings were modest and akin to those of Gainsborough. Like the latter, he began with Wilson. His diploma picture, *Dolbadern*, was an obvious reminiscence, and all the youthful works painted at the end of the century approximate very closely to his exemplar. They give the same site, the lake, the ruins, the little figures with the classic gestures. Yet it is easy to distinguish between the two artists. The Turner of this period is, if we set aside some rare exceptions, an insipid reflection of his predecessor. We are amazed to see how much life Wilson possessed, and inclined to find new charms in his rococo. Turner, it seems, had not taken over this rococo, or had laid it aside in the course of his activity, and in this his greater independence became apparent. A rococo master in the nineteenth century would have been antiquated, and not remarkable in any other way, and Turner, a sorcerer even among the most dexterous of the Englishmen, is not in the least old-fashioned. But in Wilson's rococo there is not only the distinctive mark of the eighteenth century, but a wise gradation of colour, a stimulating play of planes, a rhythm directed to pictorial ends. Gainsborough attempted to replace this rococo by the richer methods of another world, which were more agreeable to his desire for liberty. Turner took the matter more easily. If the reduction of the picture to the scenario implies the greater freedom of the artist, Turner is incomparably freer than his predecessor ; and, indeed, no small portion of his fame is based upon this. But the recognition of this, even if we admit the doubtful premise, yields no positive value. The freedom of an artist, as of an individual, remains an empty conception, until we know the opposition it resisted and the results of the emancipation. The entire Turner problem, one of the most typical problems in modern art-history, is contained within the meshes of this simple consideration.

Turner was not content with the Wilson of the small landscapes ; he also drew the large canvases into his domain. And while he was far from achieving the peculiar excellence of the former, he came very near to the latter. His large compositions of the first years of the nineteenth century, *The Tenth Plague of Egypt*, *The Destruction of Sodom*, &c., belong to the same category as the Niobe picture and similar works of Wilson's, in which the charm of the rococo master is reduced to a minimum. A feature common to the two is that the details fill the frame without any convincing relation one to another. The difference lies in such a thing, for instance, as that in the pictures of the one persons, in those of the other whole cities, are destroyed. Turner's sphere of interest was larger. When he painted these pictures he was also painting more realistic works, such as the agitated sea-piece with the shipwreck and the fishing-boats, or the famous coast-scene, *The Sunrise*, historical pictures like the *Death of Nelson*, English river-scenes and harmless genre, to say nothing of other essays. This extraordinary versatility was not developed gradually in the space of some ten years, but forthwith. Before Turner was thirty he had produced several works in each of the domains of painting. But this rapid extension of the creative sphere was merely peripherical, and responded to no

spiritual necessity. It did not raise him a hair's breadth above Wilson's modest level, and merely complicated an eclecticism which seems to us natural and pardonable in Wilson and in Turner crassly disproportionate. It was the same poor, thin technique, whether it was applied to a stormy sea with drowning men or to smoking ruins, whether it made use of contemporary or antique gesture; and it is the more disappointing in Turner because it presents itself with inordinate pretension, and is in no sense due to the enthusiasm of a fervid epigone. Wilson could only work in the one way. Within his modest sphere, he went through all the phases of his beloved exemplars, and in his merits as in his weaknesses appears as the reflection of his greater relatives. The kinship ennobles his dependence. Turner's motives were more egotistical. Wilkie had had a great success at the Royal Academy in 1806 with his *Village Politicians*. The following year Turner exhibited his *Blacksmith's Shop*, a picture very unlike anything he had previously shown. It was quite in Wilkie's vein—argumentative persons in a workaday setting—but the actors and the scenery were somewhat altered; the schema without the subtleties of Wilkie, who concealed the charm of piquant colour under a simple design. A superficial observer might conclude from this that Turner had this string too upon his lyre, and was therefore greater than his exemplar. To keener eyes, which delight in probing the system of an artist, Turner's stuff was clumsy imitation. He did not betray himself so obviously again. As a boy he had studied in Reynolds' school in the Academy, the high school of plagiarism. Sir Joshua never found an apter pupil.

His proceedings were identical in a different form. His piracy, masked by the qualities of an apparently comprehensive personality, which exaggerated the sentimental effect of the original it assimilated, and became equally injurious by its distortion of the model, was more harmful than Sir Joshua's, because enriched with a greater confusion of qualities. Claude became to Turner what Rembrandt was to Reynolds. The experiment was a more favourable one, inasmuch as it dealt with an artist whose system was less complicated, and who was therefore more easily magnified. Claude's quiet shadow, his wide perspectives, which seem bald to all garrulous spirits, invited decoration. The discreet colours could be replaced by more resplendent tints, the whole style of composition seemed to allow of all sorts of combinations. In the ten years between his *Garden of the Hesperides* and his *Dido* Turner finally exchanged the lesser exemplar for the greater. It was a question of scene-shifting.

Turner used Claude solely to improve his theatre. He discovered in Claude what Gainsborough thought he had discovered in Rembrandt—the effective central motive.* Two or three pictures, like the Bouillon Claude in the National Gallery with the embarkation of the Queen of Sheba, had shown him the advantages of an illuminated central motive surrounded by shadows. The bright centre could be produced by a watery surface with ruins on either side

* The schema was indicated by a contemporary writer. Rippingille says: "In a great number of these productions there is no proof of the true motive; such pictures appear to be made by a recipe and to order. They are tame and mannered to excess. Each contains a large splash of light in the centre, with certain masses of darks grouped round. Nor is there often any variety, novelty, or ingenuity comprised in these; so that the treatment, in a few examples, becomes rapid and commonplace. This continued trick, often marred in the process by slovenly treatment, has the less to recommend it since it has no claim to originality in Art; and as regards Nature, it is partial, insulting, and injurious to the boundless and eternal variety of effects in which she presents herself to our notice and admiration" (quoted by Thornbury in his life, new ed., London, 1897, p. 408).

—the favourite form—by a battle-field, or a man-of-war, or a herd of cattle, &c. A certain effect was always assured, an effect which could be prolonged. It was only necessary to gradate the colour on every side, and to employ the greatest possible number of objects for this gradation—dragons, nymphs, temples, gondolas, &c.—preferably things with which romantic mortals rightly or wrongly have fantastic associations. By this means an effect at once pictorial and agreeably exciting was achieved. The obscurity of its genesis enhanced the charm. This last circumstance was the decisive factor. Turner's emulation of Claude was an unerring speculation on the hastiness of the general inspection of works of art. He painted his pictures as the ordinary visitor to galleries is wont to see them.

Claude's *Embarkation* is not, literally speaking, any nearer to Nature than the Turner which hangs beside it. Claude had no more seen his picture in Nature than the creator of the Pantheon had seen the forms of his cupola. He had built it himself. The whole scene, with the palace on the right, the Corinthian pillars on the left, and the carriers in the boat in the foreground, was freely invented. Freely, but not capriciously. There is nothing arbitrary in the arrangement of the distance, where every line, every dot contributes to the effect of space demanded by the law of perspective. Every child knows that this Italian Renaissance building never contained the apartments of the Queen of Sheba. If the ships and the people obviously did not belong to her legendary age, but to some later period—nay, if they belonged to no age, and were creatures of the painter's brain—they yet played the part of realities in the work, and played it faithfully, as if the scene were no imaginary perspective, but actuality. For the proportion which prescribed the relation of all the great parts, as of all the smallest details, to their neighbours belongs to reality. It is the same with the colour. It is true that Nature may not always show all the tints which enliven the raiment of this festive multitude, though, indeed, there is nothing abnormal about them ; reality, we might rather say, would clothe such incidents with more striking and dazzling splendour, so that the eye of the spectator would be fatigued too quickly to enjoy. Claude avoids this disturbing accident of magnificence. He gives a harmony, which assigns to the colours solely the part played by the single tones in a musical chord, or it would be more exact to say a sequence of chords, the variations of a theme which gives perpetual new aspects in different chord sequences. This is the case here, in this marvellous harmony of blue water with gray architecture, with the tone of the sky, and the gold of the sun breaking through the atmosphere. These three chromatic powers are the natural vehicles of the harmony. The architecture and the sky have the repose necessary to ensure the equilibrium of the gleaming expanse of water. Together they give the theme in the sustained three-four time of a simple fugue. There is already an extraordinary richness in the play of the rippling waters, to which the sunshine lends a metallic lustre. The waves seem to give just as many tones, tones of one and the same colour, moving in equal rhythm, differing by shades, a bluish lustre changing to a greenish one, veiled with silver, flowing continuously, only recognisable in the mass as a uniform surface. The runs in which the motive is repeated, are represented by the boats with their contents, the persons, both those in gala dress in attendance on the queen, and more especially those on the shore in the foreground, the spectators and slaves who are stowing away the baggage. Here the eye again discovers the pure basis of the water in small quantities. Claude's beloved deep blue appears in the dress of the man who is pulling the rope.

Close beside it blue and white meet for a differentiation of the silvery shade of the water, and in the box which a tawny slave is lifting into the boat the blue is grouped with black and an indescribable brick red, forming one of the rarest of the many combinations. These chords, with the water playing about them, concentrate all the colours that lurk in the picture, even the yellow of the sunlight. They show, in addition to the linear perspective, the genesis of another, which, in the group of the queen, with the soft red and blue garments, and further back, in the more distant details, undergoes the same diminution noticeable in the other perspective. And beside it a third scale, which makes everything that tells through colour and arabesque appear in relative subordination, and without which the charm of the details might be an exercise of taste. It is the soul of the picture, the fundamental scale of all the other scales, the highest affirmation of the law : light. In this we recognise the hero of the work. It enhances the effect, but at the same time makes us acquainted with the whole complexity of pictorial manifestation; acts as intermediary between artist and spectator, just as the actual sunshine does between us and the cosmos. We " see " what the artist built, and organic nature emerges from the manifold ideas of his imagination. The variations of the theme, which manifest themselves emphatically, are therefore by no means arbitrary, not only because each of them has a legitimate motive, but because their multiple effects are indispensable to the impression to be produced. We can imagine a different architecture and other figures, a herd of cattle or the side of a ship in the place of the water. But it is impossible to modify the law which determines the illumination, the degradation of the colours and the perspective. This guarantees the objectivity of the art for us, raises the work above the limitations of the single work, and unites it with ourselves and with all normally reacting beings of the future. And though we may not find in every Claude the richness of the *Embarkation*, or the charm of its famous pendant, the waterfall with the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, where the red, blue, and yellow of the exquisite central group have the crystalline resonance of a trio by Mozart, yet he always affords us glimpses into Nature—*i.e.*, into well-constructed harmonies. And when an occasional picture is less generous to us we are affected as by a cloudy day, which prevents all the charm of Nature from showing itself. Turner does not lack this or that quality to achieve a like degree of impressiveness in his pictures, but the chief thing, the basis, not only of an effect after the manner of Claude, but of any deep artistic impression. He exaggerates the splendour. At a first glance his pictures may seem richer. They are fuller. We get the impression, always avoided by Claude, of that proclamatory magnificence which stimulates curiosity. This curiosity is of necessity as ill satisfied here as in reality, when, attracted by some striking scene in the street, we rush up breathless to discover that the phenomenon is merely some trivial accident, some fantastically dressed simpleton, or the king driving by in his carriage. Excitement ceases at the moment when we have realised the occurrence. Claude avoids this moment. He too can arrest us at first by curiosity, by a striking gesture or something of the kind. But when we come nearer, the net of his variations, invisible from afar, begins to entangle us. That particular gesture is related to a hundred others, which continue to fascinate us, and to set degrees of interest of increasing depth in motion. Unobserved by ourselves, our passive curiosity becomes the active co-operation of our subtlest organs, spiritual enrichment. Turner is a genre painter in comparison, though not, of course, one of the usual kind. He too knew the danger

CLAUDE LORRAIN: MARRIAGE OF ISAAC AND REBECCA
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

of the momentary intoxication of curiosity. He does not avoid the moment, nor does he transpose it into a system of organic effects, but prolongs it by all kinds of devices, above all by the indistinctness of his action. He is a builder of façades who seeks to mask the lack of definite structure by all sorts of decorations on doors and windows, and to hide the bad materials under gay paint. But his pictures are like such houses, uninhabitable. None of the decorative details in Turner's *Dido* can compensate for the faulty construction. In spite of, or rather because of, the rich architecture of the foreground the eye finds no true point of support. The picture is slipping down, so to speak. The perspective does not serve as a sounding-board for the motive introduced in the foreground, to throw back the tones, enhanced by echo, but plants the effect in space. We look past glistening things into nothingness. Here again the cunning craftsman foresaw disaster. It was for this reason only that he put the bridge in the background, which is meant to terminate the picture. An emergency bridge! The compactness of Claude's structure was not to be achieved by such petty means as this.

Art is mathematics, though not of the calculable kind that can be demonstrated with a footrule. It leaves the personality full liberty to work with the most primitive means imaginable. The old masters, who knew nothing of the devices which are now familiar to the humblest draughtsman, managed to paint divine pictures with the means at their disposal. This because they proceeded logically within their sphere of effect, because they had the principle, though not all modern applications of it, because they achieved harmony by unities peculiar to themselves. Turner contradicts, not an abstract standpoint in optics or in any other science, but himself, his own mathematics. When in the *Dido* he suggests an atmospheric effect of perspective apparently far in advance of Claude, he binds himself to a definite degree of knowledge, and if he does not carry out this degree logically he is either insincere, because such thoroughness would make other, and to him more important, effects difficult, or he is a bungler who cannot think out what he has begun. It is not the beginning which is decisive. The initial effort in many of Turner's pictures implies a power of conception unique in his age. But this is as non-essential as the amazing displays of skill of some infant prodigy. It is the execution that really matters. Hundreds before and after Beethoven have had perhaps the same motives in their heads. His glorious invention lay not in the idea of making a melody out of six tones, but in creating a symbol of infinity out of these finite elements.

Thus in the *Dido*, the more convincingly Turner essays an effect of perspective that should be an advance upon Claude, the more crudely do the lacunæ in his scale reveal themselves. It would be impossible for the figures on the left to look as they do if the pillar beside them looked as it does. It is impossible that we should be able to recognise the details of the bridge in the extreme background, and even the structure of the masonry, if the atmosphere were not a mere arbitrary presentment, but the basis of the whole composition, and it is impossible that the central portions of the right side should bear the relation to their ends and the whole of the banks should bear the relation to each other which Turner asserts. The colour is treated after the same fashion as the perspective. Just as Claude's whole arrangement is aped, so is the water imitated. But Turner modifies the blue with his favourite golden yellow, and so introduces a foreign body into the harmony, and one which demands a perfectly different harmony absolutely opposed

to Claude. The golden yellow remains an assertion which is by no means borne out by the implication that it is in itself nearer to Nature. For the proof is not to be found in the agreement of this part with a part in Nature, but only within the frame of the picture, in the homogeneity of all parts. The lack of all deeper logic in the relations of this colour to the others makes the picture gaudy rather than rich in colour, and that part of the effect which seems to transcend Claude really only exaggerates the same difference, very much to the disadvantage of the imitator. The use of light emphasises this still further. Light is not for Turner the sense that holds the picture together as the rhythm holds a poem, but two things : firstly, one of the many factors with which he provides for the plausibility of his naturalism (nota bene, very often, as in the *Dido*, with glaring ill-success). A sun in the position indicated in this picture could not so illumine the water and the banks. This would be unimportant if the æsthetic purpose of the illumination were fulfilled—a purpose which is not, of course, concerned with the demonstration of the concrete natural phenomenon, but only with the further consequences of the relation of the light to the landscape, namely, with the stylistic characteristics of the system of illumination. Claude's *Embarkation*, which Ruskin compared to a child's primer, not only shows the naturalistic phenomenon in incomparably closer agreement with our modern experience, a far greater diversity of radial effects—especially apparent if we compare the reflections on the water with Turner's treatment of a similar surface—but above all it shows light as the stylistic element of the picture, bringing all the illuminated portions together in a perfectly definite relation. It is just this second weighty significance of the light which Turner overlooks altogether, replacing it by a centre, in order to give prominence to certain portions of the picture, the objective importance of which seem to him to warrant it. It is only this entirely extra-pictorial consideration which can explain the ghostly moonlight illumination of the *Dido* group on the left side of the work. It is the Bengal fire, which should fitly celebrate the queen's foundation of the city. If we call this flame the sun, we are driven to the conclusion that there are several suns in Turner's picture. And this we should be willing to concede if these lords of light really ruled, if from their multiplicity we got the warm harmony which Claude achieves in many a night scene with the faint light of the crescent moon.

We must not make it a reproach to Turner, as certain English critics have done, that he attempted anything so fantastic as the representation of a city's foundation. The naïve mind has occasionally lighted upon things more remote, and yet has produced credible beauty. But fantastry without system is an evil; it is invention which does not aim at making plain what it has seen, either in dreams or in reality, but confines itself to the curious idea of placing a non-historic event upon the canvas.

The fantastic scene is here, as in the works of so many moderns, solely a means of avoiding the artistic solution of a worthy task, and characterises the difference between Claude's poetry and Turner's romanticism. We find the same disproportions in pictures of all kinds and of all periods by him. In the *Bay of Baiæ* (National Gallery, No. 505) the delicate background, the blue mountain-fringed water, has nothing in common with the crude foreground disfigured by the two impossible trees, akin to the tree in the *Carthage* (N. G., No. 506). The same may be said of the *View of Venice* (N. G., No. 370). To what giddy heights do the Canaletti scorned by Ruskin soar when compared with these amateurish scenes! The

Ulysses deriding Polyphemus is quite formless. There is no reason why this structure of rocks and ships should not be continued for a few metres to the right with other masses of cloud and other suns. Many of Turner's pictures contain, like this one, several pictures in one frame. If in the *Carthage* and similar works we imagine one side away, we get a passable picture. In the *Fighting Téméraire* this proceeding would leave a very fine sunset, and would produce perhaps the best of Turners, whereas now the ostensibly more important left portion, with the ships, in which a perfectly arbitrary attempt is made to repeat the harmony of the sky, destroys the balance of the canvas. In one of his latest fantasies, the famous *Queen Mab's Grotto*, Turner goes so far as to include three or four pictures in the same frame. The division between the passage with the shooting Cupid and the rest is distinctly perceptible in the drawing, as in the tone and colour—the fiery red and yellow; even the bluish white sky above is disturbing. The grotto is the second part, the least interesting, in the vicious manner which even the official catalogue of the gallery admits to be "almost formless." * The third would be the right side, with the remarkable person who is being drawn in the air by the swan, and the crowd of other figures. Even after this division by three there would still remain the lofty ruin in the background, which bears no relation to any of the other parts.

To pile things up! This became Turner's principle more and more as the years passed by. To bring together as many things as a frame would hold, then to shake them up vigorously, and leave the rest to Ruskin! And especially heterogeneous things. The soap bubbles in the *Vision of Medea* of 1831, or, in the *Landing of the Prince of Orange*, the white shield with the definite blue coat of arms on a ship in the mists of the background, the outline of whose masts and sails is barely distinguishable, and other such variety effects, are comparatively harmless when compared with the *Fire at Sea*, with its Rubensesque infernal cascade illuminated in the modern manner, or the *Great Western Railway*, where the dance of nixies obligingly diverts attention from the paltry rendering of the chief motive, or the fireworks of the painter's last years. It was but seldom that Turner resisted this theatrical devil. The *Burial of Wilkie*, where the atmosphere, compounded of blue, black, and white, blends all the portions of the composition harmoniously, only succeeded because Turner was content with a simple scale of colour and moderate dimensions, and had Dutch models not beyond his powers before his eyes. The other exceptions also owe their relative artistic completeness to the artist's limitations. The not very vigorous, yet nervous organism of the waves in the little sea-piece *Port Ruysdael* (N. G., No. 536) is a refreshing oasis in the desert of his last period. Comparison of this picture with the earlier sea-pieces shows a distinct advance. The *Port Ruysdael* is infinitely superior to wretched genre scenes like the *Calais Pier* of 1803 (N. G., No. 472), in which Turner forestalls Achenbach's maritime tragedies, or the simpler but no less helpless marines such as the *Bligh Sands* of 1809 (N. G., No. 496). In this picture Turner seems really to have caught something of the spirit of the distinguished master of Dutch marine painting. The advance could be further demonstrated by various other works, if we could examine Turner's production without reference to the bewildering complexity of opposing tendencies. But how little the character evolved from such a sifting would typify the actual tendency of the artist!

* See the large illustrated catalogue (Cassell & Co., 1900, iii. 332) in reference to the Undine picture (No. 549) of the same year.

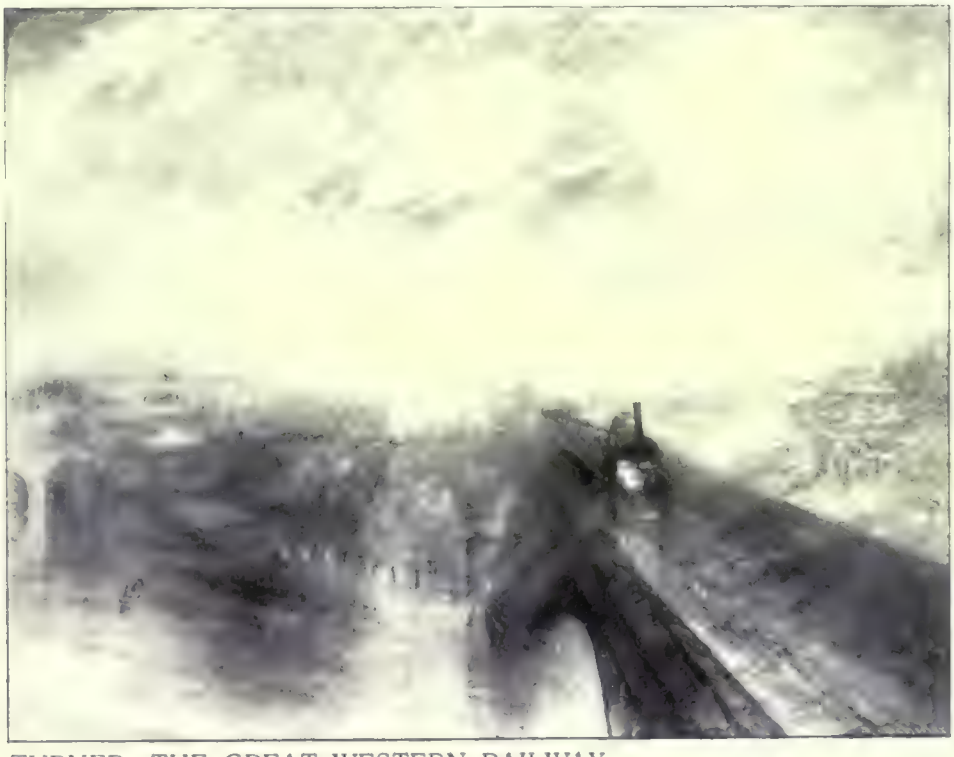
I fail to follow the critics who have the perspicacity to distinguish different styles or periods in Turner's development. Robert de la Sizeranne has finally put forward this suggestive classification : the classic, Wilsonian style of the first period, the realistic style of the middle period, and the " evocational " or purely Turnerian style of the last period.* Among these the last category bears the most characteristic name. When a phenomenon loses all relation to concrete representation, it is itself taken as a pattern, and a new rule is built up from a purely arbitrary incident. To my mind, Turner never had what may legitimately be called style. If Turner's fantastic imprimatur can be called style, and his painting art in the higher sense, then all the masters to whom we owe our artistic culture have lived in vain, and art is not to be looked upon as the loftiest affirmation of law, but as an intoxicating phenomenon of an ephemeral kind. On the other hand, he shows fragments of style-culture. Firstly, fragments of bygone epochs, which accompany his whole activity to the end ; and, secondly, fragments of a synthesis, which are also apparent in all his periods, but more especially in the last. To the first he undoubtedly owed his best pictures. They are not his most original works ; indeed, they are, as a whole, far removed from the general conception of the purely Turnerian style, and will seem unimportant to those who place originality above the recognition of law. Most of them belong to his earlier years, and are of small dimensions. There are about half a dozen in the National Gallery. The best of them are hung together, enframing the *Burial of Wilkie*, and are simple landscapes, devoid of all fantastic elements, obviously inspired by Wilson's tradition, but portraying a Nature truly felt by the artist, and seen with a painter's eye. Later on Turner never showed such sincere surrender to the object as in the *Clapham Common*, the charming group of anglers, and the famous trees which seem to greet us in every corner like old friends, or in the *Clievedon on Thames*, with with the cows in the water. There are in various private collections in England a number of similar pictures of the same period, showing the same promising beginnings of a landscape painter with freer vision than Wilson and an airier flight than Gainsborough, who might have continued these two predecessors.

The fragments of a new synthesis arise from Turner's susceptibility to the imponderable charm of atmosphere. This tendency is characteristically modern. Turner had a prescience of the path modern landscape would take. His personal utterances, recorded by Ruskin, reveal a more or less sure consciousness of the importance of the physical phenomena of air and light for the future. This perception is manifested in many pictures of all periods. If in the *Snowstorm* of 1812 (N. G., No. 490) we suppress the whole of the lower part, with the impossible Hannibal episode, there remains a very remarkable representation of an atmospheric phenomenon, which achieves an impresssion of reality. He himself carried out the suggested suppression in later pictures. The *Snowstorm* of 1842 (N. G., No. 530) shows the play of the agitated atmosphere without the distressing heterogeneous genre scene. Even if we did not know that Turner had experienced this storm himself upon the water, we should suppose it. One of the sea-pieces in the James Orrock collection of the same year gives the decomposition of the moist element by movement and light, and convinces in spite of the garish colour.

Turner's strongest power of suggestion rests on this capacity. It was combined with an opposite and much less prominent tendency. Turner recorded

* *Studio*, special number, 1903, p. 3.

TURNER: "THE FIGHTING TÉMÉRAIRE"
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON



TURNER: THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

certain details of Nature conscientiously, drawing a tree or a leaf with great fidelity, or reproducing mountain formations convincingly. The bewildering impression produced by his pictures was aggravated when the spectator discovered suggestions of the old masters in this conglomerate of unwonted actualities, affinities to Cuyp in the silky atmosphere of his landscape, reminiscences of van de Velde in a river scene, or one of the venerable classic forms in this new light. But even those who, preserving their reverence for the old masters under the magic of the innovator, were recalcitrant to the suggestion of the naturalistic detail, and saw the comic aspect of Ruskin's mineralogical and botanical expositions, succumbed to the charm of the magician's atmosphere. The most cultivated French connoisseur of the time, carried away by Turner's effects of light, declared: "Claude, le suprême illuminateur, n'a jamais rien fait d'aussi prodigieux." * Leslie, one of the best of the English critics, was not blind to his compatriot's limitations. He perceived the theatricality of his art. "For my own part, when I look at the *Building of Carthage* I feel as if I were in a theatre decorated with the most splendid of drop-scenes; but when I stand before Claude's *Embarkation* I am in the open air enjoying the sea-breeze and listening to the plash of waves on the beach." More prudent than Bürger, he guards against depreciation of Claude, and puts Ruskin aside with touching patience. But he does not persevere in his perfectly right course, and instead of concluding logically he avails himself of the outlet which has served so many hundreds since his time, declaring that the aims of the two artists were not the same. Finally, when Turner comes into direct rivalry with Claude he is subdued: "Claude could not paint a storm."

This suggestion was, in fact, but one of the stages of Ruskin's naturalism, based upon the degradation of art to a purely reproductive manifestation. The rarity of the Nature reproduced does not make the reproduction a work of art. Before those Turners which are restricted to the representation of atmosphere or of certain effects of light, and are not disfigured at the outset by heterogeneous things, do we not seem to be observing Nature demonstrations of a special kind? Their sphere of interest lies outside æsthetics, and so is very speedily exhausted. For how should a bit of canvas overlaid with colour give us objective information concerning the movement of air or the optics of light? Photography and the spectroscope are better aids than the unscientific methods of a painter, and the idea that a picture by Turner adds materially to our knowledge of Nature could only occur to those dilettante minds which might be termed the amphibia of opinion, because they live partly in art, partly in science, and are at home in neither. Beings like Ruskin are the deposits of an age which set about giving natural science its own field of labour. We do not look for, nor can we find, the physical qualities of the storm, nor the optics of rays of light, in art; what it should give us is a symbol of their might. Even the vigour of a Rubens cannot turn a windmill or warm our skins. But Rubens gave an unerring image of storm by showing the effect of the elements upon his creatures, the manner in which trees, men, and clouds were bent by the same force, and his whole cosmos was stirred by the same agitation. In his *Meleager and Atalanta* at Brussels we do not see the storm which blows away our hats and buffets our limbs. We are quiet enough before the picture, and yet we rightly feel ourselves carried away. The motive power is not the threatening extrinsic element, but Rubens the god, who sits enthroned

* Bürger, in "Les Trésors d'Art en Angleterre."

above his world, and whose "quos ego" sets the winds in motion. If at a first glance the audacity of some of his human structures fills us with alarm, it seems to have been evoked merely to enhance our subsequent sense of security in this play of the elements. For however vigorous the gesture may be, there is always something more vigorous which enforces repose. We find nothing of this in Turner. We see conditions. Nature was perhaps like this when he beheld it at a given moment. But whereas here nothing remains after this supposition, we do not even consider the point in the case of Rubens. The security he inspires is not based on an extra-pictorial examination of facts, but on the picture itself. What he asserts is proved, not by Nature, but by himself; and herein lies our prescriptive right to call Rubens Nature. Turner lacks what Aristotle calls (in tragedy) the philosophic principle, and what Lessing formulated, when he desired the elimination of surprising phenomena in drama, and demanded the genesis of characters and passions. He was curious, and he satisfied curiosity. He was no constructive spirit, who opposed the depth of his organism to the cosmos, and evoked a new Nature out of Nature, but a purely receptive organ, assimilating all he encountered, governed only by physiological limits. Turner reproduced Nature or his own fantastic ideas just as he had at first reproduced art. Nevertheless we may discern fragments of a new synthesis in Turner's works, though in no sense do they support the monstrous assertion that Turner had a decisive influence on the nineteenth century, and was even the pioneer of modern painting. It would be disastrous indeed for our art if it were based even in the smallest degree on the weakness of such ancestors. The qualities most opposite to Turner's idiosyncrasies are those which have loosed the pinions of nineteenth-century painting for its loftiest flights—a thorough comprehension of its artistic inheritance, a deepening of independence, and above all, stern self-discipline and purity of sentiment. Even the personal relation of one or the other great master to Turner cannot be demonstrated. The assertion of various art historians that the Impressionists are the descendants of Turner is an outcome of that conception which sees form in Turner, does not remark his formlessness, and takes Impressionism for a colour-category, instead of recognising its colours as variable constituents in a new system of beauty.

The newly arranged Turner Room in the Tate Gallery is well calculated to confirm the error. The effect is more harmonious than that of the large room in the National Gallery, because the pictures are for the most part of Turner's last period. At a first glance they might be taken for misty Monets of a late date, full of light colours and tender tones. *The Thames from above Waterloo Bridge* (No. 1992) seems to presage the London impressions of the French painter. But that which the aged Monet really has in common with Turner here, his contentment with "tours de force" of the palette, is not a quality that will add to his fame. Still we should be amazed at the richness of Monet, even in these works of his old age, if we could see them side by side with Turner's Thames pictures. Even here, where the minimum was demanded of the painter, a closer examination reveals Turner's lack of order. The colours are harmoniously juxtaposed, but they do not cover the drawing. The details are falling to pieces. The vague outlines of the steamer, the bridge, etc, seem to have nothing to do with the structure of the picture. Such a charge could never be brought against the weakest Monet. In some of the renderings of atmosphere, on the other hand, (*e.g.*, Nos. 1980, 1984, 1987), all Turner's usual defects are absent. Our eyes

seem to be veiled by a vapourous haze. But this purely sensuous phenomenon exhausts the charm. The eye wanders helplessly from one picture to another, and finds nothing to arrest it, nothing to call forth a vibration in the soul of the spectator. The manner suggests Whistler. He too turned such accidental aspects of atmosphere as those of Nos. 531 and 1990, for instance, to a like insignificant account, and I shall show later on how this pseudo-modern approached Turner in other ways. In the *Evening Star* (No. 1991) even his Japanese aspect is foreshadowed. Other fantastic examples (Nos. 552, 553, 554, 2066) recall Monticelli, but if we examine them more closely, the point of contact is a ghostly variety of colour, which in itself would never have made Monticelli the great artist he was.

Turner's influence is confined to superficialities, to the production, so to speak, of a veneer of valuable tendencies. In the creative process every artist goes through an initial phase, in which he confines himself more or less to a passive attitude. It is the first moment of suggestion, the allurement of Nature. The motive is perceived, yet the artist has not exerted all that individual force of perceptive activity which leads to creative conception. Every person who keeps his eyes open will discover a thousand beauties every day. This depends on his receptive faculty, not on a special gift, but on a possibility of abandoning himself to agreeable impressions which depends on circumstances. He lingers where another would pass by under the stress of business. This receptiveness may become so strong as to induce expression. One ponders his impression, another speaks of it; this one describes it, that one would fain paint it. Each of these essays in expression is an embryonic condition of artistic creation. The master fortifies this receptiveness by an active tendency opposed to its passive conditions. In reality he resists impressions more readily, chooses his moment of self-abandonment more cautiously, selecting those occasions which will make it most fruitful of results. He only loves where he feels safe in lavishing the whole treasure of his tenderness, and receives only when he can requite the gift an hundredfold. In his relation with Nature he is always the male. Artistic creation consists in the systematic transformation of the thing given in accordance with the mind of the creative personality. As God created the world after his own image, so does the artist create his work. He gains a new value out of infinity—*i.e.*, he opposes himself to infinity, to what seems to him the unruly flood of phenomena, arranges what was disorderly, divides, achieves a new order. That which fascinates us in great works of art is the triumph of mind over material. Turner consumed Nature instead of experiencing it. He made use of his painting for those misty initial stages of thought which higher natures work out in their heads, and in the process he hit the superficial characteristics of the motive like a bad dramatist who has chanced on a good idea. He expressed himself prematurely, before he had condensed his material; and as soon as he saw his hasty memoranda on canvas or paper they exercised a suggestive reflex influence upon him, enticing him to ephemeral completions of this ephemeral condition. He did not conquer his material; he played with it. His connection with Nature was a flirtation in which Nature was never taken captive. He had not the strong fervour of the man who consciously applies all his strength to a worthy task, but was an essentially feminine spirit, loquacious, coquettish, charming in trifles, intent on surface and not on depth. He saw in Nature what he shows us of himself, a beautiful, scintillating aspect, born of a fleeting impression, and reflect-

ing the same. We are not unmoved by his works, especially if we let them pass us on the wing. We divine what he desired to give, what he might perhaps have been able to give, a world woven of vapour, adorned with beauties more fragile than the art of his time, and presaging things which have now taken solid form, since the victories of the painters of light. He has given us an embryonic condition of this art, the divination of a dilettante. If we must associate him with Impressionism, it must be as the passive constituent of this phenomenon. Of the essential qualities which led up to the summits of this art he had but one—receptiveness. "He had beauty's phases at his fingers' ends," says the most clear-sighted of his critics, "but not its causes." *

Turner's passive attitude to the exterior world, his conception of art as a channel for the flood of phenomena, and not as a regulating, transmuting organ,

* This is Armstrong's brilliant conclusion:

"In the case of Turner, we cannot satisfy our æsthetic appetites as we do before the Titian. The more intimately we look into the texture and constitution of his pictures the less significant, the less stimulating in themselves, do they grow, and the more imperative does the necessity become to look through them to something beyond and comparatively external. Turner, in short, does not create, he adumbrates; he does not present original and concrete ideas of his own, he reproduces and illustrates existing things, playing with them, indeed, and enhancing them, so far as imitation can enhance the thing imitated, arranging them anew, for the most part with extraordinary sympathy and vigour, but seldom depending on the power innate in the language he is using to carry his own emotions into the souls of his fellow creatures. But this last sentence is ambiguous. As it stands it might be taken to suggest that he had the right emotion, but deliberately curbed its expression. That is not my meaning. What I mean is that he was weakly endowed with that emotion, and that it was kept down and hidden away by the overpowering strength of the passion he shared with his great exponent, a passion for the external beauty of inanimate things. He was content to perceive and be moved by that beauty. He felt no consuming demand to know its cause and use the knowledge for the delving of new and self-existing forms of beauty out of the microcosm within himself. He watched phenomena and learnt them; classed them and recombined them, with all kinds of personal modifications, exaggerations, and enhancements; but he was not inquisitive into the *why* they produced the effects of beauty, sublimity, repose, or horror which they did. He had beauty's phases at his fingers' ends, but not its causes. He could show you *how* trees, mountains, rivers, mists, even dews and frosts, adorned the earth, but the instinctive grip of the uncompromising artist on the *why*, and the consequence of such a grip, the power to create beauty without the help of immediate imitation, he only possessed in a limited degree.

"All this argument brings me round to what I said at starting, that Turner was a mediator rather than a maker, that his instinct was towards explanation, illustration, and insistence rather than towards creation, that his pictures exist for what they tell us rather than for what they are, and, consequently, that his achievement must be measured, more than that of any other famous painter, by collation with free and pre-existing beauty. He was no virtuoso. He never hung upon the charms of his instrument, coaxing it to make the most of its essential and distinctive gifts and persuade the stander-by that no rival medium could pour passion so richly from one human vessel to another. The sympathetic caress of a Giardini, the despotic lunge and finger-sweep, alive with nerve and will, of a Stevens or a Gilbert, the balanced drag of a Metsu or a Chardin, building up in ecstasy things which offered in their own substance the seeds of their own immortality, had no parallel in him. He kicked at the limitations of his medium, and employed a more willing ingenuity in pushing on beyond it than in showing its native felicity. And to this, it must finally be said, he owes the unprecedented worship he now enjoys. The multitude will never again understand the arts. The probability is that as the generations pass and man creeps farther and farther away from his primitive condition his comprehension of Nature's language, of those multitudinous signals by which the good of things was made known to his young and eager sense, will slowly die away, until at the last a capricious criticism will be substituted for the old instincts, and a long succession of reactions for the logical development of the great and simple ages of the world. Meanwhile the contest goes on between those who see beauty but not its cause, and those who see both the one and the other. For the former art is imitation, reproduction, illustration, selection, everything which involves the supremacy of the object and the humble obedience—which is by no means the same thing as the deliberate self-suppression—of the artist; for the latter it is the creation of beauty by welding its elements—line, colour, sound, whatever sense can grasp—into an organic whole, justifying its own existence by its share in the balanced order which controls all vitality. On the result of the struggle between these two conflicting ideas depends the final verdict on the achievement of Turner." ("Turner," by Sir Walter Armstrong; Thos. Agnew & Sons, London, 1902.)

explains his productiveness. The most prolific geniuses do not approach him in the extent of their output. Armstrong reckons some 21,000 pictures, drawings, and sketches, and among them "2000 more or less finished works of art." Compared with this mass of production, Reynolds' activity was a trifle. Turner might be called the landscape manufacturer, a pendant to the class stigmatised by Hogarth. Whether he made large profits, whether he was content with the prestige of an original and his assurance of posthumous fame, and coveted no public honours, whether his lasciviousness was more jealously concealed than Sir Joshua's dignified egotism, are all secondary questions. Technological considerations are also of little moment beside this significant conception of his calling. To seek an explanation in Turner's taste for water-colour would be to mistake effect for cause. Constable's definition of the oil pictures as "large water-colours" does not exhaust their defects. We could forgive Turner his sins upon canvas if he made amends for them on paper. But the least exacting critic cannot accept such atonement. The water-colours are more normal than the pictures. They conform more organically to the history of this favourite branch of English art, and the level of excellence in this subordinate art is so modest that Turner is more impressive in this domain. But if we compare him with the greatest of these "little masters," with John Cozens and Girtin, whose superiority he himself honestly acknowledged, we shall find the same relation we have already noted between his pictures and those of Wilson and Gainsborough. Here again he replaces the essential elements in the tendencies of his predecessors by a hastiness of conception which suggests a freer and more modern attitude, but lacks all thoroughness. Thornbury's superficial dictum that "Girtin was a great artist and Turner a great poet" * sufficiently indicates the sphere of Turner's effects. I think, however, that Turner was certainly less inclined to encumber the delicate structure of his water-colours with his grotesque fancies. Their hastiness ensures their primitive harmony, and their unpretentiousness spares them that sharp antagonism which is evoked by the pictures. But how slight are the spoils of the patient souls who have waded through the sea of papers in the cellars of the National Gallery! The same schema on every wall; the same indications of promise in every sheet, and always the same disappointment. We imagine we are approaching the soul of the chameleon, and only find a new receipt. Turner's joke at a party, when the salad was handed, that a Turner could be made by admixture of the mustard sauce with the green of the leaves and the red of the beetroot, was cruel earnest. I prefer his "Liber Studiorum" to his coloured drawings. The tone of the aquatint has more vitality than the variegated tints of the water-colours, and the charm of Turner in his early period is more apparent here than anywhere else. We must pass over all the fantastic motives, and those that incline to classicism, for these show the artist's weaknesses even more glaringly than the pictures. But the purely landscape motives, such as Nos. 37 and 43, where his treatment of light is more convincing than in his most brilliant pictures, the *View of Basle* (No. 43), with the rich atmosphere, &c., contain enduring beauties, while in some very dry drawings a certain satisfaction is to be had in the truth which is so distressingly lacking elsewhere. Of course the object Turner had in view when he prepared the book, one which itself reveals volumes concerning the man, is no more accomplished here than in the pictures he had hung between the two

* "Life of J. M. W. Turner," London, 1899, p. 64.

Claudes. Beside the "Liber Veritatis" the "Liber Studiorum" sinks to the level of cheap literature, and this in the face of what the English critic rightly calls an unfair rivalry, by which reproductions of Claude's works, collected together without his knowledge and without his supervision, indeed, several generations after his death, were brought into competition with a series prepared with the greatest care by Turner himself. The "Liber Veritatis" reads like a pastoral poem. The tender love-story of Daphnis and Chloe sounds between the lines. Other passages are like an epic of foreign lands and peoples and their strange fates. Ruskin was distressed to find no natural history in this book. He praises the poetry in Turner's descriptions of travel.

In the later drawings and sketches, again, the monochromes are superior to the polychromes. There are one or two fascinating things among the *Wanderings by the Seine*, the originals of which are preserved in the National Gallery. The *St. Denis* of the second series, published in 1835—the river with the silhouettes of the people in the foreground, the dark masses of houses on the bank and the cathedral in the distance—shows the magic of which Turner was capable when he was not a conscious magician and was not seduced by his palette. The famous sketch of his latest period, *A Pilot Boat*, in the National Gallery, needed only to have been carried a shade further to become a masterpiece, and it was not by chance that the painter executed it in plain sepia. His pleasure in the arabesque of his brush-stroke was as dangerous to him as the allurements of his facile colour. When he was stippling his minute perspectives he thought first of the stipple, then of the perspective. Hence many of his landscape drawings look like half-effaced topographical maps. The spectator is no longer able to keep the meaning of the signs together. In many of the panoramas we know that the subject is a landscape merely by some detail quite outside the technical structure. The technique is ornamental before it fulfils its natural purpose. It becomes that "infernale commodité de la brosse" which Delacroix dreaded, which never fails to expose every painter to mannerism who does not set the concentration of expression before him as his safest guide. The well-known story of the landscape that was hung upside down may or may not be true. It was certainly possible. There are plenty of late Turners which might be so hung without any material injury to the effect, while there are still in these days many amateurs whose insistence on the ornamental in painting leads them to accept this anecdote as a criterion of mastery.

Like the landscape painter Gainsborough, Turner left many fragments at his death. After Hogarth's universal form, compact as a cannon-ball, came Wilson, a weaker spirit, who had to content himself with a reflection of his age. He owes his harmony to his incapacity for resistance. The form of his time was solid enough to carry him. In Gainsborough the same age warred in vain against the perception of a modern mind. It succumbed. But its defeat did not give victory. The pliancy of the rococo master "malgré lui," who examines Nature and Art for favourite motives and gives himself up to selfless enthusiasm did not, and could not, evolve the new synthesis. The new man had to make tabula rasa of rococo, had to withdraw into himself once for all, to be alone with the fervour of his emotion, to accomplish the creative act of a new form for his age. Gainsborough longed to do so. He thirsted after consciousness; he did not want to give forth the sounds evoked by the age from his susceptibility, but to evoke sounds himself. He sought after a new birth of the cosmos, and turned to the

master who had made a like venture with success some hundred years before. His work is a fragment to which the warm impulse of life clings, and it could be no more. Turner followed. The development was obscured. For a moment it seemed as if the age had made a prodigious leap forward. Turner began with Wilson, and, if we are to credit English enthusiasts, he ended at the zenith of that new art unborn at his birth. But he gives only a fantastic prophecy of what was coming, a presage which reddened the skies, but left it uncertain whether the red heralded morning or evening. He failed to announce the basis on which the new art was to rise, and contributed no serviceable building-stone himself. That which he announced was subject for grave forebodings. Should the new structure really serve merely for the intoxication of inferior minds? Would the new masters show themselves as treacherous to the old as Turner to Claude? Would they interpret Nature just as coarsely, deal as hastily and as heartlessly with art? But eyes steeled by contemplation of Hogarth's lofty art can withstand the dazzling effect of Turner's aerial witchery. One needs but the standard given by development from its earliest beginnings to recognise that the novelty is merely apparent. If we break through the convenient mist which will only keep back the most uncritical we find the old futilities, once more the rococo. Not, indeed, the friend or the foe of struggling predecessors, not the rococo of Wilson and Gainsborough; more modern, seeking to deal with God's sun as the peaceful architectural painters of the eighteenth century dealt with their broken columns. A false rococo; it forfeited the body, and lost both form and emotion; born, not of desire, but of necessity, the makeshift of painter-writers. The product was not even Turner's own. Other dexterous painters had been before him, who attempted to replace strong forms by feeble ideas, and gave a more facile interpretation of Hogarth's variety. It is the rococo of Fuseli and Stothard,* which had matured another and no less suggestive variant in Blake; incapable of treating pure realities, it took refuge in mysticism. It was this development, not that comprised in Wilson, to which Turner belonged. He must, indeed, be reckoned among the men of the present. He inaugurated that series of problematic figures who did not open the way to modern art, but who threatened to close it. They seek to show their modernism by turning away from the law of their predecessors, and have deluded the present with the belief that their arbitrary notions are the fulfilment of the new law. Each of the countries which have contributed to modern development has produced several such personages. Each has its special type of degenerate. But the essential fallacy is always the same: the supposed extension of the domain of art by tendencies lying outside its boundaries. The danger lies in the popular prestige of these pseudo-moderns. Not only do they usurp the place of more useful beings, but they infect the whole region. Their errors are more prolific than the wisdom of the great masters. Among all the variants, the Turner problem is the most complicated, and therefore contains the greatest dangers. The worship of originality characteristic of our age, which delights in novelty, acclaims the most extravagant orgies here. The aureole gains in splendour from an extremely

* In his best pictures, among which I do not include the famous Northamptonshire decoration, Stothard is greatly superior to Turner, who made use of him just as he made use of Wilkie. Compare his *Sans Souci* in the National Gallery (No. 1829) with Turner's so-called *Bird-Cage* in the Tate Gallery (No. 507). In spite of its crudity how much more sincere is the "dix-huitième siècle" effect in the Stothard, how much sounder the colour! Turner's scene is like a caricature of Watteau.

pliant schema, which does not operate like the Böcklin cliché (the German variant), with premises easily recognisable as false, but appeals to a stronger gymnastic of culture and more delicately attuned organs of sensation. The problem here lies, not in the manner, but in the degree of effect. Turner, in fact, expressed himself artistically. He made use of artistic means for non-artistic ends. He was really a luministe, familiar with the phenomena of the atmosphere, who knew how to turn them to account, and who had, as Dayes said, "a superficial notion of form," but nevertheless a notion of form on which he played spontaneously without any perceptible reserve of underlying emotion. The difference between the invention of a man who has sublime things to tell us, and uses a system of complicated effects for the purpose, and an eccentric who wishes to amaze us, and perhaps himself, and who builds up a no less complicated structure for the purpose, is not very clear from a distance. The less legible art becomes to the eye of the layman, the more easily does the burlesque succeed. There is no fantastry in which the fantastic cannot discover a meaning, and all the rest depends merely upon how much such fantastic persons will write and print in order to transform their personal idea into general suggestion. Turner's burlesque had this peculiarity, that the parody was written before the original.

TURNER. SOLWAY MOSS. (AFTER THE ETCHING.)

CONSTABLE

Denique sit quid vis
simplex duntaxat et unum.—HORACE.

ENGLAND'S successful leap in a direction which had escaped the versatile artist who seemed to have embraced every side of art was more or less contemporary with Turner. Nothing could be more remarkable than the fact that England had room for a Constable at the moment when she had produced Turner, the most bewildering result of her fundamentally erroneous conception of art, the richest type of her poverty. It is impossible to imagine a stronger contrast. We cannot indicate more strikingly what is unconditionally allied to great art, what is unconditionally remote from it, than by the names of the two contemporaries. The exemplification is so striking because Turner draped the inartistic in the most enchanting robes, and Constable presented the artistic in the simplest guise.

Constable's few references to the colleague who was held up to him, not by Ruskin alone, as a being enthroned on unattainable heights, are full of respect, and show the same self-effacement as his reverence for Reynolds, his dependence upon Stothard, and his estimate of Fuseli. We find it difficult in these days to understand such mildness, especially in a man capable of such healthy and independent work. We are accustomed to less eclectic geniuses, whose fidelity to their chosen task justifies the bluntness of their judgments upon other aims and tendencies ; we are distrustful of those who profess to understand everything, and doubt whether their indulgence to others is compatible with the necessary sternness to themselves. Nowhere is good-nature more akin to weakness than in art.

But Constable's judgments were not inspired merely by good-nature. He could be pungent enough about those whose work had no redeeming qualities. His attitude to art differed from that of his contemporaries, and the gentleness of his criticism is a symptom of this attitude. His relation was freer. He was less dependent on the productions of others than Turner, less so even than Gainsborogh, and much less so than Wilson. He was the first artist since Hogarth who looked upon painting as a purely instinctive manifestation. He was more instinctive, more direct than Hogarth ; indeed, it may be said of him that no one before him had dealt so naturally with art. For the majority of his compatriots painting was a charming and profitable business connected with a life of comfort, a holiday enjoyment for the poor, a luxury for the rich, a thing bearing no true relation to the realities of life, but giving man an illusion to support him in the seriousness of his existence. The illusion had a thousand degrees, embracing not merely the higher and richer fields of sentimentality, but playing upon all the registers of eclecticism. Art was to be beautiful above all things, and beauty was what was found agreeable in the art of the old masters. The period of the portraitists had striven to establish this in every shade. English art possessed a reflection of the Dutchmen, a reflection of the Spaniards and of the Italians. To this store Turner had added a reflection of Nature—creating the instructive landscape. He

had painted romantic scenery, adding appropriate figures calculated to anthropomorphosise the character of the scenery. Constable took no part at all in any of this process. He never painted for the love of good painting or of beautiful Nature. His art is more elementary. "When I sit down to make a sketch from Nature the first thing I try to do is to forget that I have ever seen a picture."* No eclecticism, evidently! No breath of an alien art came between the individual and Nature. He carried this so far that many of his contemporaries questioned his title to be considered an artist, even when they praised his pictures. They thought there was something in Constable essentially different from all they had hitherto accounted art. He was to them a child of Nature of a peculiar disposition, who substituted truth for beauty, and made amends by his sincerity for his inability to respond to the traditional demands of art. Bazalgette, the French translator of Leslie's biography, has recently noted this attitude of the painter. In his charming preface he speaks of Constable's "souci minimum du style." He thinks that the Englishman looked upon Nature as mistress, on his art—"produit direct de la terre"—as servant, and that he laid hold of reality for its own sake, "non pour le parti qu'un peintre peut en tirer en le déformant." † Such a conception might easily have led to a naturalism "sans phrase," against which no one, indeed, protested more vigorously than Constable himself. The painter of the *Hay-Wain* gave us new forms, but not new æsthetics. His art was as remote as possible from Ruskin's natural history ideals, and was, in contrast to that of Turner, system in the best sense. It did not reveal certain hitherto unnoted aspects of a given object—what we suppose to be this is either illusive or unimportant—but simply variations of the beautiful, which is eternal, like Nature, to which Horace addressed his odes and Goethe owed his inspiration. In principle it did not differ from the art proclaimed by the official father of English painting. In the summer of 1813 the famous Reynolds Exhibition took place, inaugurated by an official banquet which the as yet unknown miller's son attended with some pride. Leslie gives a fragment of a letter in which Constable writes enthusiastically to his betrothed of the presidential speech. "Although the style of Sir Joshua Reynolds," he says, "might differ in appearance from the style of those specimens of art which are considered the nearest to perfection in the ancient Greek sculpture, and the productions of the great schools of Italy, yet his works were to be ranked with them, their aim being essentially the same—the attainment of Nature with simplicity and truth." ‡ The lofty words no longer seem very applicable to the subject of this convivial enthusiasm, but they might be used very aptly in praise of the man who accepted them so unquestioningly, recommending his betrothed to go to the exhibition very often, in order to get an idea of the true nature of painting from these magnificent works. For in them was to be found "the finest feeling of art that ever existed."

The illustrious President of the Academy would hardly have returned the compliment. He would have been no more disposed to recognise the simple landscape painter's relation to that high art of which he accounted himself a representative than he had been in the case of Hogarth. The relation was very similar. A

* "Life and Letters of John Constable," by C. R. Leslie (new ed.; London, Chapman & Hall, 1896).

† "John Constable d'après les Souvenirs recueillis par C. R. Leslie." Paris, Floury, 1905.

‡ Leslie, p. 49.

kindred strength of personality, enabling them to preserve the originality of their outlook, to see with their own eyes and act upon this vision, brings Hogarth and Constable together, and places them outside the official school of their native land. In spite of this, or, indeed, because of this, they are the more vigourously English. They gave us something that could only have arisen in England, and the product, relatively independent of the Continental movement, forms an indispensable constituent of European art. Within this relationship Hogarth's aggressive character and Constable's so-called naturalism appear as secondary tendencies, governed both by contemporary influences and by the special temperaments of the two, and this difference is but a superficial veil over their common work at the same ideal. The objective of the one was the rococo, with which his contemporary compatriots had a more or less illegitimate connection; the other accomplished the liberation that had been prepared, and steered the little craft of the new art from the sandbanks to the open sea, where only it could prove its stoutness.

CONSTABLE AND CLAUDE

Constable also followed a tradition. "A self-taught artist," he said, "is one taught by a very ignorant person"; and the sentences with which he prefaced a series of four lectures in 1836 on the history of landscape painting are very typical:

"I am here on behalf of my own profession, and I trust it is with no intrusive spirit that I now stand before you; but I am anxious that the world should be inclined to look to painters for information on painting. I hope to show that ours is a regularly taught profession; that it is scientific as well as poetic, that imagination alone never did and never can produce works that are to stand by a comparison with realities; and to show, by tracing the connecting links in the history of landscape painting, that no great painter was ever self-taught."

An old master might have said these words; and were such truths manifest to the present generation, were all agreed with the preacher of these golden axioms as to the double function of art, scientific and poetic, could all see therein a regularly taught profession, which should purify imaginative power, our modern culture would have made a gigantic advance. That the speaker should have been Constable, that the word Nature is absent from these curt categorical sentences, not because he was not thinking of Nature, but because the thought seemed to him a matter of course, should give food for reflection to those who insist on Constable's naturalism.

Constable, then, relied upon predecessors just as Hogarth did, but not at all after the manner of the school of Reynolds. A circle of geniuses reveals itself in him, becoming greater and greater the further we penetrate into the nature of the artist. But whereas the spirits of those who were turned to account by the others rise with angry gestures against the productions of their epigoni, we seem to see Constable himself within the circle, and those who helped him glance kindly at him, almost as if thanking him for what he owes them.

No name was so often on his lips as that of Claude, the same Claude Turner aspired to rival. The occasions when in his youth he visited Sir George Beaumont's fine collection were red-letter days, and even in his latest period he always returned to the master with fresh enthusiasm. Yet there is no picture by him which bears any external resemblance to any of Claude's works. We never find the famous stately buildings in any of his landscapes. No nymph, no daintily aproned Italian rests in the shadow. She would seem as extraordinary here as if we were really to meet her during a country walk in England. No Biblical story is enacted by the figures, no scene from mythology. A cart with reapers still in the vapour of the field where they have toiled till they are weary, horses towing a barge along a canal, resting or working men and animals—these are the only episodes in his pictures, besides that which goes on in a landscape irrespective of man's collaboration. And this to him was the chief thing. Yet his likeness to Claude is appreciable. It reveals itself to him who does not look upon the nixies and ruins in the great Frenchman's pictures as the most important things, but can pierce beyond details to Claude's organism. To him the artist of the "Liber Veritatis" appears rejuvenated in many an early work of Constable's, making him say that if such a spirit had

arisen in the time of Constable he would have painted in the manner of the English miller's son. The truth is the same in each; not, of course, the objective truth. This is impossible, not merely because Constable lived two centuries later than Claude, and had a correspondingly greater experience of humanity at his disposal. How insignificant is this progress which has brought Nature in general nearer to man, as compared with the knowledge which a great artist evolves from himself! Impossible, rather, because two such complete personalities, were they contemporaries, or divided by centuries, would never fix their eyes on the same things, even though they were both landscape painters—nay, even if they both painted the same landscape. It is not realism, but that Veritas so aptly linked with Claude's life-work, which reappears in Constable. Nothing impresses us so strongly in the Frenchman's pictures as the harmony between the work and the soul of the artist. Claude is so clearly manifested in his pictures that our memory carries away no actual landscape, but something higher, the idea of a marvellously inspired humanity, which, inversely, we are no longer able to connect with the customary realities of a landscape. The form is above reality, as thought is above the body. The part played by Poussin and Claude in the history of landscape is of great importance, but this historical consideration is but a small matter in comparison with the importance of these spiritual heroes to the development of human idealism. The only possible continuation of Titian and Veronese was through victory over their glorious materialism. Their splendour could not be increased; but it could be spiritualised. Constable had this spiritual value in his mind when he called Poussin's little *Phocion* landscape, which had also stirred Gainsborough's enthusiasm, "full of religion and moral feeling." * The Englishman's realism was not disposed to travel further on this road. Claude's lofty spirituality is as impossible in our age as the simplicity of Mozart's exquisite poetry. We no longer possess the organs for such contemplativeness. The alertness necessary in our age makes us too vigilant, directs our minds too inexorably to concentrated thought, makes us too full of doubts and yearnings to keep our souls as unruffled as the pellucid surface in which Claude's humanity is mirrored; and when contemporaries seek to give us similar impressions we are not unjustly suspicious of their simplicity, which cannot or will not give us what it should, while their completeness lacks the unsophisticated Veritas. But Constable was able to steep his soul in his work after the manner of Claude, to become one with his painting, and to penetrate its forms so intimately that a spirit seems to emanate from his pictures too, which is no longer landscape, but aims at higher conceptions. His final result is also the idyl, differing, indeed, from Claude's magic world, and still more remote from the eighteenth century, which set the idyl above everything, and because it had no affinity for that of the old masters, created a new one, smaller than Claude's wide fields. It transformed the spacious Nature

* Presented to the nation by Sir George Beaumont in 1826. It represents a wooded region near a city. In the foreground a man in a plain robe, supposed to be Phocion, is washing his feet at a public fountain, as if to indicate the purity and simplicity of his life. Bazalgette fails entirely to understand Constable's remark. "Que peut bien être un paysage moral?" he asks in amazement. "On ne voit pas trop comment le peintre révolutionnaire et réaliste uniquement soucieux de vérité qu'était Constable, peut à ce point admirer l'académique et froid Nicolas Poussin. Il était vraisemblablement séduit par l'intense harmonie de couleurs et de composition qu'offre parfois le peintre des Arcadies." This is a typical confirmation of the naturalism I have just ascribed to many of Constable's worshippers, which leads inevitably to a denial of his art.

of the classic landscape painters into a well-kept garden, and was compelled to represent the idyllic by tender groups of daintily dressed persons. Constable could not call back either the spirituality of the one or the tenderness of the other. It is because, more determined than his compatriots, he gave up all idea of reaching Eldorado by the road of the old masters, because he did not attempt to make idyls, but bore within him what even in these times of ours we might call the emotions of an idyllist, that he succeeds in producing an impression akin to that produced by Claude upon our minds. His landscapes too have the inestimable gift of shedding peace, of breathing calm; and they achieve this without raising a wall between us and our age, without deceiving our senses, but rather the reverse, since they enable us to recognise what is around us better than the cursory glance of the hasty observer can do. This power of perception was not derived from Claude. Constable looked only with his own eyes, and took in other things than the classic painter. But that high example taught him to keep the same equilibrium in what he saw afresh. And it is, no doubt, chiefly this balance of parts that makes his idyls so precious. The life-history of the man corresponds with his art. It glides along gently as a cloudless summer day. No shepherd's biography could be simpler. A peaceful childhood in his father's mill, where the boy learned to watch the clouds, and outside in the woods, where he became familiar with the trees. A worthy father, with the usual distrust of the artist's calling; a no less worthy and highly intelligent mother, more lenient to her son's secret yearnings. A long engagement—an inevitable complication!—to a lovable girl. Maria Bicknell was the daughter of a dignified lawyer, who, like Saskia's guardian before him, did not take kindly to the idea of the miller's son as his son-in-law, and the granddaughter of a still more inexorable clergyman of considerable means. The obdurate old man's money-bags threatened the happiness of the loving couple. Young Constable further embroiled himself with the purse-proud cleric by a malicious caricature, and Miss Bicknell was warned that she would be promptly disinherited if she married the good-for-nothing painter. She hesitated to incur the penalty, not for lack of sympathy with her John, but because it would have been rash, and contrary to all the family traditions. They must wait, and John resigned himself good-humouredly to the inevitable. The love-letters cover five years, till he was forty and she thirty. The poems and letters of Cowper, "the poet of religion and Nature," a favourite author of both, reflect the emotions of the lovers. "I believe," wrote Constable, "we can do nothing worse than indulge in useless sensibility"; and his betrothed exhorts him not to sacrifice concentration in his work to love. As was the engagement, so was the marriage—twelve years of undimmed happiness, brought to a close by the death of the wise and loving wife. Not quite ten years had passed, spent by the widower in quiet resignation, surrounded by beloved children and faithful friends, when he died at the age of sixty-one, the doctors being unable to name any specific disease as the cause of death.

The course of this worthy existence had but one thing momentous about it: art. But art was nothing extraordinary in Constable's life. Unlike the activities of many great men, it did not manifest tendencies totally opposed to the rest of his being; it was in rare but literal harmony with the rest of his personality. There was nothing abnormal about it. Painting was Constable's natural intellectual form of existence, and we could no more conceive of him apart from it than we could conceive of any cultured person without their thoughts and emotions.

"Painting is with me but another word for feeling," he wrote to his kind and faithful friend the Rev. John Fisher.* Hence the impossibility of putting any sort of constraint upon his Muse, his inability to complete portraits he had undertaken for the sake of money—portraits he left unfinished, to the stupefaction of his friends and even of his betrothed. Hence the fact that he was no more successful with religious pictures than Hogarth. Every step outside the path of pure instinct was prejudicial to him. This path led him to paint what he had about him, what he loved, and only to paint when he wished. The originals of his pictures lie within the space of some three miles, on the banks of the Stour, at Bergholt, and in Dedham Vale, where he spent his youth, and whither he always returned. It was by no means a rugged Nature, but a cultivated landscape, with well-tilled fields and trim woods, with farms and windmills. "Those scenes made me a painter, and I am grateful: that is, I had often thought of pictures of them before I ever touched a pencil." The phrase is characteristic, and recalls Gainsborough's assertion that this same East Suffolk had made him a painter.

Gainsborough and Constable were natives of the same district, and their common home seems to have given them a certain kinship. There are many affinities between the view of Dedham by Gainsborough and Constable's pictures of the same motive. Constable's earlier renderings more particularly suggest his predecessor. The earliest of these is the beautiful little sketch of 1802 in the South Kensington Museum (No. 124), which the artist used some twenty-six years later as the basis of a large and comparatively detailed picture, far removed indeed from Gainsborough. In the sketch Constable had caught something of his compatriot's dreaminess. In the motive he is differentiated by this, that he does not, like Gainsborough, set a few trees in the foreground through the foliage of which we look, as upon the stage, in order to make the distant view of the light background more effective, but leaves the whole plain open. We need not inquire which of the two renderings comes nearer to Nature. Nothing is more likely than that Gainsborough really found the trees thus conveniently disposed. Constable's choice was more natural, because he avoided every sort of theatrical effect, even such as Nature herself provided, and left a wider field for effects, not of Nature, but of Art. His landscape compelled him to develop a richer play of linear and colouristic values than Gainsborough, who was content with the simple opposition of the two planes. Constable's *Dedham* of 1809 in the National Gallery (No. 1822) is still closer to his predecessor as regards motive. The point of view is obviously almost identical, save that Constable kept rather more to the right, and therefore the church tower, which in the elder man's picture comes nearer to the left, stands in the centre of his composition. Nevertheless the pictures as a whole resemble each other but little. We almost feel as if Gainsborough had painted the landscape lying on the ground, and Constable while flying over it. The playfulness of the older painter is in even stronger contrast to the large masses of the younger man, who achieves far greater variety, in spite of his incomparably broader handling. They remain akin in the intimacy of effect, the indescribable sense of well-being. But this sensation which attracts us in Gainsborough appears on a much higher level, so to speak, in Constable. It does not fascinate us at once; it is interwoven with a web of more neutral phenomena; but the effect is all the stronger when we have once grasped it. The relation to

* Leslie, p. 105.

the beloved predecessor was not always so free as in the example we have been considering. Constable studied Gainsborough conscientiously. There are many landscapes dating from the first years of the century which clearly reveal this influence. *On Barnes Common*, in the National Gallery (No. 1066), with the famous windmill, the *Lake Windermere* in the Cheramy collection, &c., look like enlargements of small things by Gainsborough. The affinity persists at a later period, long after Constable had conquered independence. The advantages of the central motive struck him also. The *Hay-Wain*, the *Cornfield*, the *Valley Farm*, and others seem like free continuations of Gainsborough's landscapes. But the sequel leaves the beginning far behind. Gainsborough never quite got rid of the notion that landscape should be a background for something. He was always thinking of a stage, and enclosed his central motive hermetically. Constable opened his pictures, letting the light in from every side, and especially from above. The whole world seems to have grown lighter, more fruitful, and richer in a decade or two. Even the richness of those very elements which Gainsborough had in his mind had increased. The opening up does not impair the mystery of Nature, it does not banish poetry; only that which is to be shown no longer lies so conveniently in the way. Constable perceived that Nature never thinks of the lyrical or dramatic when she distributes her mountains and valleys, her trees and meadows, that all these dispositions are automatic, as soon as the richness is there which seems thus to one, and otherwise to another, and that the only essential thing is to create that fundamental cause of our delight in the world, richness.

Constable was the richer of the two. He had in himself, in his strong and healthy activity, all that Gainsborough learned from tradition. He saw in a tree a vehicle of more varied events than those which the romanticism of a rococo master laid in its friendly shade. The tree lived out of its own vigour in its own cosmos, not only in our fancy; it was no concept, but an actual being. In his last lecture at Hampstead he painted in playful words the fate of an ash which he had drawn, and he was more in earnest than his listeners imagined when he spoke as if he were dealing with the life-history of a person. "Many of my Hampstead friends," he said, "may remember this young lady at the entrance to the village. Her fate was distressing, for it is scarcely too much to say that she died of a broken heart. I made this drawing when she was in full health and beauty. On passing some time afterwards I saw to my grief that a wretched board had been nailed to her side, on which was written in large letters, 'All vagrants and beggars will be dealt with according to law.' The tree seemed to have felt the disgrace, for even then some of the top branches had withered. Two long spike nails had been driven far into her side. In another year one half became paralysed, and not long after the other shared the same fate, and this beautiful creature was cut down to a stump just high enough to hold the board." * The fanciful words seem to me to show a more convincing feeling for Nature than all that Ruskin extracted from Turner's documents. As we may well suppose, this kind of Nature was not at all to the taste of Ruskin, who thought nothing so truly "high art" as Turner's "real trees" and "real mountains." He was repelled by the homely motives, or fell into the grotesque mistake of comparing Constable with Berghem.† Constable was able to justify his simplicity. As he spoke of the tree, so

* Leslie, pp. 103–4.

† Leslie draws attention to the comparison, mentioning Constable's horror of everything connected with Berghem.

he painted it. Not in such a manner as to stamp the rendering with a sentimental sympathy; this would have been somewhat after the fashion of the board on the tree; but rather with the solicitude of the portrait painter before a beloved model. The two large water-colour studies of trees in the South Kensington Museum (Nos. 1248 and 49) are treated with an exactitude of detail that recalls Japanese masters, though the details never degenerate into the pettiness that marks so many English nature-studies. We are shown all the characteristics of the tree—the stem, the branches, down to the smallest twig, the foliage—and yet we see before us a tree, and not a collection of its peculiarities. The greater richness as compared with Gainsborough was, in fact, greater objectivity. Gainsborough certainly did not love Nature less sincerely; he may, indeed, have been more tender to her. With Constable, on the other hand, we are less conscious of this love as such than of its result. Benjamin West understood this when he said of the study young Constable showed him, "You must have loved Nature very much before you could have painted this." * In art, indeed, it is not so much loving that is important as to have loved—*i.e.*, the emotion which was strong enough to become objective. We can refer the various degrees of excellence in English artists from Hogarth onwards to the varying degrees of this capacity for objectivity, and then, in spite of certain formal resemblances, we shall see the essential difference between Constable and Gainsborough and between Constable and Turner almost palpably before us. Of the three, Turner's emotion was the most superficial; it lay in his finger-tips. Constable's was in the deepest recesses of his nature. The essential similarity of Constable and Claude, in spite of all their formal difference, reveals the same kind of conception. As in the case of all delicate things, we can only arrive at a clear conception of the relation between the two by a circuitous route.

Claude was Constable's noblest affection, the figure he approached with the purest feelings, as the youth approaches his first love. He worshipped him from afar, and the consciousness of a kindred emotion sufficed him as the price of his self-surrender. It was this Platonic relation only which proved fruitful. Turner's egotism resulted merely in a convention "à la" Claude, and carried the imitator far away from the spirit of his exemplar. Constable's unconventional manner struck Delacroix as even superior to Claude. On one occasion in an enthusiastic eulogy of the Englishman, he asks whether after all some of Claude's landscapes are not injured by the conventional character of certain trees in the foreground.† We may be sure that Delacroix was not concerned here with the relative value of different systems, but that he pronounced an absolute judgment. We have to reach Claude's blooming Paradise over crumbling ruins. The thieves who wanted to plunder the garden were fools enough to be content with the débris.

* Leslie, p. 15.

† In his notes on "L'Idéal et le Réalisme."

CONSTABLE AND THE DUTCHMEN

Constable's relation to the Dutchmen was entirely different. He espoused them, and the fruit of this union was a glorious art epoch that still endures. He accomplished the task his contemporaries in Holland neglected. There the great masters who had begun the conquest of landscape in Rembrandt's time had been succeeded in the eighteenth century by a feeble race who had to suffer for the sins of the subtle Italianisers, Berghem, Poelemberg, Moucheron, Karel du Jardin, &c. Nothing of Van Goyen's and Ruysdael's realism remained. In obscure little masters such as Dirk van der Laen, who extended into the nineteenth century, some faint reflex of the great epoch still persisted,* more a curious relic than an earnest of brighter things in the future. The vitality of Dutch painting had been exhausted, on the one hand in the rococo, on the other in classicism. It was a remarkable dispensation that Constable, who had no greater reverence than for Claude, should have re-established the healthy tendency which had been lost through a mistaken conception of his favourite's influence. And it was a beneficent dispensation. For this disposition safeguarded the reaction from the opposite extreme, and did not allow a sickly idealism to be followed by a no less disastrous naturalism.

A whole volume might be devoted to setting forth in detail the part played by Constable as the successor of the Dutchmen. C. J. Holmes has attempted it, and has at least suggested the point of departure.† The limitations of the Dutchmen lay in the specialised character of their painting. Constable combined them. Holmes, of course, makes the boundaries of the Dutch school too narrow. To bring his hero into stronger relief he minimises the importance of the results achieved before him. It will not do to reproach a Cuyp, a Van Goyen, a Van de Velde even with a shade of mannerism, least of all when one sees in Wilson the revival of landscape, as does the author. He accuses these great men of a lack of "true naturalism," and declares that Hobbema never painted "a real oak," nor Van de Velde "a real sea." "Such criticism excites distrust. It suggests that ill-considered naturalism of which I have already spoken. To see in Constable the superlative degree of a conception based solely upon objective truth to Nature is to deny his artistic gift. It is only because he was able to transpose his naturalism into a thoroughly concrete convention that he is important. And this convention relied mainly on the laws of beauty taught us by the Dutchmen. They, according to Holmes, were merely interesting craftsmen, and we can get nothing from them

* Dirk van der Laen, the author of the charming view of a country house in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, formerly ascribed to Vermeer of Delft. He lived from 1759 to 1829. The Cuyp tradition was carried on into the nineteenth century by the brothers Strij, Kobell, and others.

† "Constable and his Influence on Landscape-painting" (A. Constable & Co., 1902), more especially in the chapter that deals with Constable's predecessors. See also the same writer's shorter study in the Artist's Library, edited by L. Binyon (London, 1901).

which would not be better learnt from Claude, Titian, or Rubens.* Holmes imagined that here he was following up his hero's train of thought in the lecture where he enumerated four memorable works as landmarks in landscape painting : Titian's *Peter Martyr*, in the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, Poussin's *Deluge*, in the Louvre, Rubens' *Rainbow* landscape in the Wallace Collection, and Rembrandt's *Mill*, in the Marquis of Lansdowne's collection. Leslie's notes do not enable us to exhaust Constable's reasoning. But that the characteristic landscapes of the Dutchmen are rightly excluded from this particular category is no argument against their importance. The criterion, which reckons with four names in art, avoids all differentiation, and precludes a consideration of landscape as such no less than the appreciation of gifts less supreme than those of Titian, yet indispensable in a fuller survey of art-history. The Titian, destroyed in the fire of 1867, is known to us only by the excellent old copy. Constable himself had never seen the original, and he might more fitly have cited Giorgione's *Concert Champêtre*, which he knew. Development shows the struggle made by painting for her own house, when she freed herself from decoration in the architect's sense in order to become decorative in the painter's sense. The stages from Rembrandt to Constable are not, of course, so long as those from Rembrandt back to the Venetians. But our recognition of the great pioneers should not blind us to the fact that the achievements of the seventeenth-century Dutchmen were no less necessary than theirs. We are easily led to depreciate them from the outset, because we view the process of development from the Venetians to Poussin and Rubens at a greater distance; it is like a monument rising far from us on an open plain, whereas the structure of the "little" Dutchmen still shelters us. We may compare the various participants in the work of development to the phases of great revolutions. A Titian, a Rubens, a Poussin accomplished the personal, the momentous act of history. Spain put forth Velazquez, and Holland Rembrandt, as champions. All these heroes of painting were worlds in themselves, self-contained programmes, in whom participation in the general history of development seems subordinate to the individual development they themselves experienced. They decreed freedom, and the nations listened to them with glowing enthusiasm. They blew up tradition. Each of them left ruins behind him. The school from which they sprang fell to pieces like the shell of the egg from which life has emerged. To wish that the world might consist solely of such heroes is unreasonable. Were this to happen, art would consume itself, and the world would gain nothing from it, because it would lack the norm necessary to get at the right distance from the summits. We owe the possibility of supporting ourselves upon these to smaller people, who repaired the net torn by the others, and so made a place in it for the new. They are the peaceful revolutionaries, who take internal affairs upon themselves, so to speak, and organise all the branches of the new régime with industry and intelligence. We should scarcely hesitate to sacrifice all Rembrandt's contemporaries for his sake, but this is a resolution we only make after having possessed them, and we could not deny that Rembrandt alone could not replace them. The oft-repeated assertion that he contained all the others in himself is grotesquely superficial. Van Goyen, the father of a whole generation of glorious landscape painters, the grandfather of a Hobbema, who carried over the heritage of the great

* Holmes, p. 44.

period to the eighteenth century, stands as firmly on his own feet as Rembrandt himself. If we made his smaller stature a reproach to him, it would be as if we reproached the butterfly for being weaker than the lion. The public is still at the puerile standpoint of Fromentin, who forgot Van Goyen, not in Rembrandt, but in Jacob Ruysdael. Among the landscape painters there is many another great one who is not swallowed up in the shadow of the painter of the *Syndics*. Cuyp is nearer to Poussin than to his own great countryman. Potter's realism is the exact opposite of Rembrandt's art. It would be foolish to look for the elegance of a Terborch in Rembrandt, and we give but a faint idea of the greatest of the Dutch painters of interiors, who was also the greatest of the landscape painters, when we describe him as the pupil or the descendant of the mighty Amsterdam master. Yet all of them, from Vermeer back to Van Goyen, bore the impress of Rembrandt ; all were his debtors. But the ray each received from him was not his vital principle ; it was an addition to his own property. All these and many another exist beside, and not through him. Each one of the two dozen names that are dear to us indicates a locality in the Holland of art, where Rembrandt towers aloft, a giant in Lilliput. And each one of these localities is an individual cultivated organism, lying picturesquely between rivers, canals, and meadows. If we pass over the land in a balloon, they may seem insignificant; one may look very much like the other, and very unlike the one Colossus who rises suddenly like a mountain in flat surrounding country. Among the " stay-at-home people," as Constable called the Dutch, Rembrandt is the least Dutch, not because he was of another stock, but because he was so great. That in him which may reasonably be called Dutch is such a fragment of his being that it does not explain him. No one ever remained so close to Nature and at the same time rose so high above it. To understand his greatness we must look at it from below. If we do this as becomes our own littleness, the other localities we shall note in his neighbourhood will reveal many exquisite things, and we shall see with amazement how community with the others tends but to increase his own variety. This, I think, was Constable's attitude to the Dutchmen. His method was not a cheap, summary criticism, which has eyes only for the greatest, and for this very reason fails to grasp it altogether ; yet his taste was severe, for the Dutch mannerists found no mercy from him ; but with this severity he combined an instinct for the Dutch spirit, and thence a mind open to all its manifestations. He bears eloquent testimony to this in his lectures, still more in his pictures. Constable was not of Rembrandt's inspired genus. The portrait of him by Gardner in the South Kensington Museum at the age of twenty, and that in the National Portrait Gallery, painted by himself a few years later, show a handsome young man of sympathetic but not especially striking aspect, the same well-disposed personality that reveals itself in the love-letters. Leslie's mediocre drawing of him in later life, and a study by Maclise,* have bequeathed us a well-cut normal English head, that might belong to some gentle scientist of a typically urban class. The passion of a Rembrandt did not lurk behind that high, smooth forehead. And yet they were kinsmen, and kinsmen by no means in a superficial and evasive degree. It was not, however, a relation that could be termed an elective affinity. Constable had every possible respect for the painter of the famous *Mill*. Yet we are conscious of a certain note of reserve in his recognition. Constable was more deeply conscious of the ravages wrought by Rembrandt in the English School than he would admit, and

* Both reproduced in Leslie's work.

CUYP: AFTER THE THUNDERSTORM
HAGUE MUSEUM

in his inmost heart there was perhaps a slight and almost unconscious resentment against the great and ruthless master. The impetuosity of the giant alarmed him. He loved clarity, the crystalline play of Claude, to whom Rembrandt would certainly have been a sealed book. He wished to make his perception deep and searching, to deal with all there is to see in Nature, but to go no further, to give nothing that cannot be seen.

For this reason the other Dutchmen were nearer to him than Rembrandt. Ruysdael stood next to Claude in his affections, and was in his opinion a genius opposed, yet equal to the Frenchman. Cuyp, Jan Steen, even Pieter de Hoogh, are more frequently cited by him than the father of Dutch painting. He commends them as "more artless." * Much as he admired the power of building up a landscape out of chiaroscuro, success on these lines seemed to him rather a happy accident than the certain norm for other architects. The art therein was to him too much formulated principle to include all he saw in Nature. Here we come in contact with one of the limitations of Constable, which not only contracted his æsthetical perceptions, but also cast its shadow over his development as a painter. The error of judgment is easily refuted, and Constable himself abandoned it when he unconsciously approached Rembrandt on another side, as we shall show. But we shall not get to the heart of the matter by hasty condemnation of the weakness of his perception; this would only furnish us with a cheap reason for depreciating the master before we had grasped his high qualities. Constable recoiled before Rembrandt's great decisions, because they seemed to him to cut off a wealth of effects he found in Nature, the unobtrusiveness of which appealed more to him, and, as he supposed, rightly enough from his own standpoint, diminished the remoteness of the painter from the object. These effects he found already indicated in those Dutchmen to whom he felt himself more closely akin. He would, indeed, have been a simpleton had he sacrificed the economy of his own temperament to Rembrandt's prestige.

Constable's relation to the Dutchmen does not depend for its importance on the discovery by him of hitherto unknown artists. He was not the first who had recognised forces other than Rembrandt in Holland. By name at least, the whole of Dutch art was known to English collectors at the outset of his career. Even Wilson is not to be referred solely to the rococo of the French. In him and in George Lambert, too, we find traces of the best of the Dutchmen. In the next generation Thomas Barker in particular continued that amalgamation of Wilsonian and Dutch tendencies inaugurated by Gainsborough. Turner had discovered Cuyp, and he repeated all the effects he noted in the fine examples of English collections. While he was making his material softer and more liquid, James Ward, his senior by several years, was subjecting his exemplars to a kind of petrifying process, and giving an ominous foretaste of the realism of the Pre-Raphaelites. For three years he toiled at a version of the famous *Bull* at The Hague, until nothing remained of that freshness of Potter's which had triumphed over all his elaboration. Old Crome approached Hobbema with more delicate organs, and the side-glances he cast at Rembrandt the while taught him not a

* "The other great painters of the Dutch School were more artless; so apparently unstudied, indeed, are the works of many of them—for instance, Jan Steen and De Hoogh—that they seem put together almost without thought, yet it would be impossible to alter or leave out the smallest object or to change any part of their light, shade, or colour without injury to their pictures—a proof that their art is consummate." (Leslie, p. 391.) The inference as to Rembrandt is obvious.

little. His brother-in-law Ladbroke and the other Norwich painters, Cotman, &c., kept still more closely to their Dutch models. Calcott, called, like several others of his calibre, the English Claude, was none the less an imitator of Cuyp and of the Dutch marine painters. Nasmyth's waterfalls seem to his countrymen like real Ruysdaels, and his Hobbemas fetched higher prices for a time than the Dutch examples of that master. Holland, then, existed in England before Constable. But it is hardly too much to say that if all these evidences of familiarity with Dutch art were to disappear suddenly from England, the aspect of European art would not be sensibly affected. The relation of successors to predecessors, broadly speaking, was in every case that which Turner demonstrated with greater skill than the rest. The greater men took from the great masters of the past, the smaller men from the smaller masters. No one added anything. But it must be admitted that the little thieves were more reverent than the big ones, and that a more sincere tradition was possible and had indeed arisen even in Constable's youth as an outcome of Crome, Barker, Callcott, and Nasmyth, than was yielded by Turner's reflections.

Constable's attitude to the illustrious school was quite different. What delighted him in the old landscape-painters was the delicacy of their self-abandonment to Nature. He did not take the one or the other of them as his master, did not paint animal-pieces à la Cuyp or scenery in the style of Ruysdael. He always painted English landscape with English figures. And the term English is not to be understood as designating a particular genre in the way in which we apply it to English portraits, which have a certain specific character. Every one of the places he depicted might be identified; every detail might be recognised by contemporaries did any such survive. It was not the motive, therefore, which Constable borrowed from the Dutchmen. This, indeed, plays no very momentous part in his pictures. The same view of Dedham, the same spot at Hampstead, or in his friend Fisher's park, recur constantly, and when he painted the lock with the horse for the first time he probably seemed to himself a very fanciful person. Yet he never repeated himself, and Turner's varied pictures seem a perpetual monotony compared with his; he was an inexhaustible inventor, not of situations but of means whereby the effective in visible Nature might be transmuted into painting. A section of a landscape of a few miles suffices to make us recognise with astonishment the immeasurable forces of the cosmos. As the art of an individual can only grasp certain sides of this effectiveness, those corresponding to his inclinations and capacities, it will penetrate the more deeply the more wisely its creator restricts his field of observation at the outset. Expansions of this field are necessary, to give the artist new chances, to refresh him. But every expansion of what is given him from outside weakens him at the same time, because it compels him to keep his most delicate powers in abeyance until the coarse rind of the material has been pierced. It is hardly necessary to say, that what may profitably be taken from without is not confined within the limits of a particular landscape, but extends to a certain class of motives. The Dutch were masters of this economy. They placed the deepening of their individual manner above the many-sidedness of the material, and appealed to highly cultivated emotions. Far-reaching competition drove the individual to specialisation in a narrow field. The country was small, and there were many artists. They were compelled to live in close proximity. The culture which compelled each not to differ from his neighbour by crude externals, but to

remain true to the intimate characteristics of the land, was sublime. Two leading manners are apparent in the multitudinous Dutch renderings of the same object. Both are methods of reduction. The one deals with the envelope of landscape, with atmosphere, and conceives of that which lies beneath it as an immutable solid. It distributes light and to a certain extent leaves the single forms of Nature, *i.e.*, the profiles of the scene, untouched, intent only upon getting rich, or at any rate specific effects of light from the chosen section of Nature.

Its medium is tone. It dissolves the world in the softness of manifold gradations, and is careful to leave no trace of the instrument behind. The other manner adopts the opposite principle. Not only does it show the brush-stroke, but it makes this an element of itself, forming it into an arabesque system designed to enforce the character of the model. The extreme of both methods is imperfect. Light without the object illuminated is ineffective. Linear design without a feeling for light leads us back to the Primitives. In a centre so highly developed as that of Dutch painting in the seventeenth century such extremes were unimaginable. What we call a tendency nowadays in our barbaric art-conditions, was able to assert itself without the frenzied sharpness of paradox. Even the most strongly marked contrasts had certain essential qualities in common; it was in shades only that the characteristic point of view made itself felt. Hence we find both methods used by all the artists of the great period, and it is only the predominance of the one or the other that stamps them. The one manner is represented by the doyen of Dutch marine painters, Simon de Vlieger, who made his sea-fights credible by enveloping them in haze, and later, when he painted the tranquil sea-piece in the Schwerin Museum, needed no animated motive in order to assert himself. His pupil Willem van de Velde and others continued him. None among them carried atmospheric painting farther than Jan van de Cappelle, whom Rembrandt honoured with a portrait. Two or three of his works in the National Gallery and in the Stockholm Museum are magical in their effect. Water, earth and sky are painted in a single colour, of which it is difficult to say whether it is white or black; it hardly suggests colour at all, or even any material; it is a medium softer, suppler and richer than the softest and richest silk, in which figures, ships, clouds, sky and waves seem to exist in a strange noiseless peace. The best Van de Veldes seem clamorous beside them, and Ruysdael's materialism becomes almost insupportable. We might ascribe these marines to another world, if the things in them were not so manifestly Dutch. Van de Cappelle was the inventor of those transcendental effects which have seduced so many dreamers since his time. Turner certainly studied him, especially at the time when he painted his *Burial of Wilkie at Sea*, producing no more than a mirage of the reality. That which he dreamt of adding to the charm of the original, a deliberate visionary element, is just what Van de Cappelle avoided with incomparable mastery. The vision of the Dutchman was a perception of the fugitive, that of the Englishman fugitive perception. This method was the antithesis of Van Goyen and his school. His tonal art maintains itself between slighter differences, and we even note how, as he grew older, he got his effects with less and less of material means. In his last period, which, like Rembrandt's, was his best, he renders a life full of colour with a bluish tone, and a blond that we scarcely recognise as colour, by the most neutral means imaginable. His material is not in itself beautiful, like Van de Cappelle's atmosphere. It has not the seductive quality of certain little panels by Aart van der Neer, the deep amber tone of

which delights us before we know what it represents. The life in the quivering strokes carries us away with it. It is more than beautiful. We admire the spirit which can set down the outline of a town on the clear horizon with a few trembling touches, and as in the famous *View of Dordrecht* in the Amsterdam Rijks Museum, merely by modulation of the brush-strokes fills a section of Nature with a gigantic perspective, revealing all its accidents. Cuyp combined the two. In his most mature period he depended on the charm of atmosphere—the coast scene with the mill in the Carstanjen collection is closely allied to the Van de Cappelle of the same collection, and he loved to divest his great sturdy cows of all their animal qualities by means of the golden light of the sun. In smaller pictures, such as the landscape at the Hague, and more especially in such early works as the view of dunes in the Berlin Gallery, he remains closer to Van Goyen, and seems to add breadth to the methods of his inspirer.

All these methods, subtly as they serve their purpose, are no mere tricks of art, but forms for highly subjective conceptions. Remarkable men of simple aspect are behind them, philosophers, who combined the quiet irony of the sage with the meditative calm of their delight in Nature, who understood the world above which they rose, admirable victors over the existence to which they clung with all their fibres. And side by side with these were others, who take their stand between the two tendencies. They were absorbed neither by the atmosphere of the one group, nor the arabesque of the other, but delighted in colour. The web of tone woven by Van Goyen and Cuyp accorded ill with their robustness. It was not given them to express themselves by an unmistakable handwriting in the smallest things. They concealed their specific manner under more ingenuous forms. Ruysdael's realism seems clumsy compared with de Vlieger, his illumination impure beside Van de Cappelle's phenomena of light. Relatively, he is rather a copyist than a creator. And yet we cannot but feel that a beautiful bit of old Holland would be lacking if we did not possess him. Hobbema's colour is of a higher order, because it fastens less upon the superficial. In the famous *Avenue of Middelharnis* in the National Gallery the colour emphasises the marvellous perspective with extraordinary taste. In the *House at the Edge of a Wood* of the Carstanjen collection a new colour is created by the flowing together of the moist brown green of the leaves with the grey of the hedge, a colour not to be found on any palette, in which we enjoy the manner of its production even more than the exquisite silvery brilliance. It is true that Hobbema composes rather with beautiful trees and picturesquely situated cottages than with abstract forms. Yet he and other artists like him preserved that healthy naturalism which gave nourishment to all Dutch expression. If, as Ruskin says, they were soulless painters, we can only wonder the more at the greatness of an epoch in which the intellectually barren achieved such powerful manifestations. It is to them that Constable seems to go back, the Constable, at any rate, of the large finished pictures, the *Hay Wain*, the *Cornfield*, the *Valley Farm*, the *Lock* pictures &c. Neither Cuyp nor Van Goyen, nor any of the more subtle Dutchmen, are contained therein. At a first glance these works suggest the painters who are, relatively, the coarser masters of Dutch landscape. The objective content is similar to that of their masterpieces in the Antwerp Museum, at Buckingham Palace, &c., and, judging by Constable's own utterances, he was more akin to the circle of Hobbema and Ruysdael than to those artists whom we justly rank above them.

VAN GOYEN: VIEW OF DORDRECHT

HAGUE MUSEUM

Constable's whole style made this almost inevitable. He was far too independent to emulate the very individual abstractions of a Van Goyen, a Cuyp or a Vermeer, the extract of the efforts of an entire race, which had only become possible under the highly specific conditions of this people and their epoch. A man like Constable could and would only approach these results by his own road, on which he travelled alone over that part of the way which their own insight and the help of great compatriots had spared them.

Let us recall his attitude to Claude, how he took nothing specific from this favourite exemplar, but did his very utmost to recognise the law that governed the transference of emotion to the work. He was too rich himself and too honest to do more than this. Hobbema and Ruysdael, whose cast of mind was sympathetic to him, exacted no intimate participation from him, but played somewhat the part of the natural model for him. To him their comparatively slight concentration implied less remoteness from Nature. The traditional element he received from them by no means limited the development of individual gifts very different in most respects from those of the two Dutchmen.

If we look closer, if we actually place a Hobbema or a Ruysdael beside a Constable, the difference is immeasurable. The " more artless " he applied to them as compared with Rembrandt might be just as aptly used in comparing his work with theirs, with this distinction, that here we are not obliged to make the weighty reservation demanded in a comparison of Rembrandt with the landscape painters. Yet we may admit that only the freedom of emotion of many of the early Dutch painters could have led to such works. But this freedom is a relative conception, which becomes the norm in the course of time. It is not easy to prove that the *Hay Wain* is better as painting than the *House at the Edge of a Wood.* The virtuosity of Hobbema, who here accomplished the uttermost with the given means, is hardly to be surpassed. Constable, on the other hand, is very much stronger as emotion ; we might even call him a virtuoso of emotion, if the term were not ill-suited to the nobility of his mind.

By a strange dispensation, the beautiful is the more easily achieved the less deliberately it is pursued. This is not only the case in art. A beautiful attitude in a human being is the result of a tension or relaxation of emotion governing the limbs. It is not what we see but what we divine behind it which delights us. It is not the beautiful, but a glimpse into the higher power which produced it that strengthens us, enlarges our experience and so prolongs the moment that it becomes eternity. If we perceive that the excited person is conscious of his excitement, it becomes finite, and our illusion vanishes. We have a bit of lifeless material before us. The distinction is hardly so crude in any one of the great Dutchmen of the seventeenth century. In the days of Rembrandt emotion remained at a higher level even among the most hardened materialists. But in a circle where so many were working in the same direction the impulse which led to the greatest accomplishment could not be given to every one. The abnormal culture of painters and the refinement of public taste circumscribed the influence of genius. Faultless pictures were painted, the syntax of the pictorial was extended to an unprecedented degree, but the ideal conditions for the production of the work of art were relaxed. People learned to paint fine pictures just as they learned any other trade, and only a greater dexterity raised the artist above the artisan. Our age, which has no artificers, made a virtue of necessity, and refined our instinct for the individual. We now recognise a tincture of the industrial element

in people who were nevertheless personalities, and we are able to determine the difference between them and great artists. And therefore we suspect that Ruysdael was less bent upon giving powerful and candid utterance to his impressions than upon making his brown and russet harmonise perfectly with the gray of his sky. We find that in many of his pictures his concern for the telling passage condemns the rest of the work to a comparative immobility. In our admiration of Hobbema's gems we do not quite forget that they lie on the surface, and that an immense prodigality of detail was necessary to produce effects, the perfect harmony of which deceive us as to their extent. Many of his landscapes do not avoid a certain over-insistent picturesqueness. The frame encloses so much, that our fancy can add nothing to it. And so we feel at times as if we too were enclosed in a frame, and see the Nature we would fain enlarge circumscribed. That each Dutchman, from the greatest to the smallest, is distinctly recognisable, does not strike us as a satisfaction that silences all objections. We do not find in all these developments of individuality the ultimate form considered as the highest spiritual aim ; rather is it looked upon as a practical type, and what at a first glance seems a token of personality has to be recognised as a limitation of the personality. This is noticeable in a Van de Cappelle, in a slighter degree in a Van Goyen, and even in the great Cuyp. Limitation to a single circle of experiences leads not only to concentration ; it may also seduce into virtuosity.

The essential difference between Constable and the Dutch landscape painters lies in the absence of all virtuosity of this description. The difference would be unimportant were it a mere negative one, or were it necessary to see a hundred pictures by Constable to assure ourselves that he did not repeat himself, or that he repeated himself otherwise than his predecessors. But the difference is positive, for it appears in every picture. Constable's force of conviction is stronger ; analytically considered, the effectiveness of his methods is greater. We trace his relation to Hobbema in his system of colour, in the style of his contrasts. But how much more vigourous is his colour ! How much richer and more varied are his contrasts ! To become rich, to multiply, to utilise the impulse, the gift of a higher soul, economically, was his principle. He could not create the impulse himself. It came to him from his blood, his race had given it to him. It was not so mighty as the enthusiasm of a Rembrandt, not so inspiring as the frenzy of a Rubens. Behind it there was always a harmless person, who took a reasonable view of life. He was great because he was able to press on to the goal with a simplicity which did not lack the English sturdiness. A mightier spirit would have solved the problem otherwise. That a Constable was necessary for Constable's task was the vivifying element in his existence.

The task was to evolve a modern system for painting out of tradition, the tradition of the Dutchmen, since they alone had worked at landscape. And landscape alone, as Constable clearly saw, was capable of giving contemporary painting the right model. Standing far off enough to see only the determining aspect of Dutch art, the manner in which the Dutchmen had divided the surface of the picture became their characteristic idiosyncrasy.

Other English landscape painters had also learnt the elementary law of art from the Dutchmen, the effectiveness of contrast ; but they had immediately given a coarse interpretation to the phenomenon, seeing in light a magical element, and in dark an obscurity, and thereby setting up a stage for sentimentality. Constable purified contrast with the sincerity of the Dutchmen from all conventional

significance, and submitted calmly to the reproach of being a mere artisan. Every picture was to him a new expression of his relation to the world, at which he worked with all the force of his emotion. But each was also to him what a picture was to the Dutchmen, a framework for light and colour, a framework it was necessary to strengthen by all the means of knowledge. Constable was a master of the division of surface. He carried it so far, and achieved so many hitherto unattainable effects by its means, that he may almost be considered to have rediscovered a method which nowadays seems to embrace the whole nature of painting. It was not only composition to which he gave airiness by skilful division. Where his predecessors, both immediate and remote, had seen a tone, a plane, he discovered innumerable differentiations, the harmony of which yielded a proportionately richer resonance. His whole history consists of continuous progress upon these lines. The generalising brown and gray of his first period, a reflection of his study of the old masters and his English predecessors, yielded to an ever increasing richness. He noted the devastation wrought in Gainsborough's picture by an inordinate use of asphaltum, and recognised the lack of structure in the dense foliage of his contemporaries. There are no black Constables. The *Valley Farm* in the Louvre (fortunately skied) would be an exception if it were genuine. The version of the same motive in the Cheramy collection is the darkest as compared with the two examples hanging opposite to each other in the National Gallery, and in this there is no dead point the size of a pin's head. Yet he did not avoid the use of black. It was indeed one of his favourite colours, and we may even regret that he was not more cautious in his choice of the dark pigment in several pictures. The black of many of Constable's groups of trees is unequalled for intensity in any other English landscape, still less in any Dutch one. But these trees are set against a spacious sky that occupies two-thirds of the whole picture. The gray of the clouds peeps through the trunks and twigs, penetrates the darkness, and surrounds it with gleaming light. In his sketches, coal-black is always surrounded by fiery red and pure white. Whereas his predecessors used black for a dreamy darkness, Constable made light with it by using it for contrast. Even in this there is an analytic element of the first importance to Constable's relation to the Dutchmen. He gave a new significance to colour contrasts, and if he did not always "leave" his pigments with absolute frankness, he broke them less than others, and so arrived promptly at the basis for a stronger synthesis. Absolute purity of colour was not his aim in this. Turner's efforts in this direction were quite foreign to him. Colour chemistry was not enriched by him. His basis is as frank a brown as the favourite tint of the Dutchmen. The difference is merely this, that his landscapes do not impress us as brown, because they are so divided that they never suggest a summarised application of colour, brown like that of the Dutchmen, or black like that of Gainsborough.

The brushing serves the same purpose in a much greater degree than the combinations of the palette. The reproach brought with more or less justice against Hobbema and occasionally against Ruysdael, that their realism approaches a kind of reproduction, is levelled against the inadequacy of a method which interpolates non-pictorial expedients—*i.e.*, media foreign to painting as such—between the natural means of the painter and his result, expedients the more harmful in landscape, inasmuch as here art demands a swift transcript of the impression. In many Dutch pictures we see the drawing under the veil of colour.

Some of Ruysdael's solitary tree-trunks with their proclamatory naturalism suggest that the modelling was not carried out together with the painting, but was completed before the painting had covered the canvas. This gives the colour the effect of tinting. Constable, on the other hand, always shows his material quite frankly, building up the whole with the same material. His incidents are not tinted representations, but the colour itself supports the incident. His synthesis is greater, in the widest sense. The unit of which the picture gives a multiple is not the tree, the leaf, or the stone, in a word, nothing natural, but colour, or more precisely, a brush-stroke bearing colour, and representing not the tree, the leaf, the stone, but a generalisation of these things. Constable once said to William Collins that a picture is like a sum, "for it is wrong if you can take away or add a figure to it." * The addition or subtraction is more or less possible in a picture where the unit is some realistic conception—a battle-piece, for instance, representing only soldiers, a landscape dealing only with trees, meadows, water, etc., any genre picture of some comic or pathetic incident. The sense might be conveyed with other "figures." We read such a picture without regard to the colour, the brush-stroke, all that has accidentally contributed to its significance. Constable aimed at a new gesture, consisting not of the outstretched arm or the proud glance, nor of a romantically curved mountain formation, but giving eloquent expression to the material under whatever form expressed, before it grouped itelf to the usual summary conception. His sea is water before it becomes waves. His leaves express the green of a leaf before they grow together into foliage, his clouds, the most exquisite feature of his pictures, by which we can most clearly measure how far he excelled all the Dutch landscape painters, are the atmospheric element of the heavens before they have taken on those threatening or friendly aspects we are accustomed to attribute to them. With drama such as this, he made form clothe itself with thought instantaneously, achieved something akin to Shakespeare, in whom what we perhaps most admire is the manner in which the action marches with the idea, never preceding it nor dragging behind it, as with the weaker dramatists, who are not absolutely masters of their material. And just as with Shakespeare we ourselves add tragedy or comedy while the poet is content with drama, so Constable's pictures invite all we ourselves would contribute, without tingeing our mood dark or light. His landscapes neither mourn as we perhaps might wish to mourn, nor rejoice as we might wish to do another time, but they stretch strong hands to us, the warm pressure of which gives us pleasure. He aimed at progression, not at a condition of existence. This explains why he was content with so few motives. The motive was the treatment, not the given scene. The *Glebe Farm* in the Cheramy collection is made up of great thick masses. The gray of the colossal sky fights with the Giorgionesque brown of the trees, and the red of the girl against the tree trunk looks like the blood shed in the combat. The sketch for this picture in the National Gallery (No. 1823) is very different. The fact that the same place is represented is a superficial matter. The real scene is entirely altered. Everything flows in the picture. The blond tone is as inseparable from the thin brushing as is the dark from the massive impasto of the Parisian variant. Finally, in the ultimate version a new material is obtained by other means. It is crystalline in structure: Hobbema's tree-tops are decked with silver points. A different scale underlies the *Hay-Wain* variants, yet another

* "Memoirs of the Life of William Collins," London, 1848, i. p. 56.

CONSTABLE: THE CORNFIELD
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

the Dedham pictures. The reiterated scene gains something akin to unity of place in drama. In the Hampstead series, Constable finally abandoned the central motive, and thus gave up his last connection with the narrower tradition of his home. Gainsborough's pleasant woodland pool has become a detail among other details, and has lost all its shadowy environment. The motive in itself is uninteresting to a degree. Save for a hillock by no means attractive in form in the foreground, all we see is a wide plain. The actual symbol dwindles to a nothing. And yet I know of nothing more fitted to show Constable's art to advantage. He must have felt this himself, or he would hardly have painted this bit of land so often.

It is here that he differs essentially from the rest of his countrymen. The pictures of the portrait-painters of the eighteenth century are differentiated only by the faces, and therefore never have a face. Gainsborough never gets away from convention. His foliage always consists of the same flat pointed splashes. He has a fixed formula for things which by their nature are subject to perpetual change and owe their beauty to the fluidity of their appearance. Morland made rococo trees as one makes rococo furniture. His objects and Gainsborough's too have an artistic structure of their own, but as this always consists of the same jagged brush-stroke, it is too one-sided, and does not clothe the design, but lies upon it like decoration. At the Morland Exhibition at South Kensington in 1904 the spectator could not stifle his yawns. The variety of the subjects with their monotony of treatment lost all variety of effect after the first six pictures. If Constable's series dealing with a single theme were brought together, the identity of motive would only help to give the impression of an irregular mosaic frieze, forming in its entirety a marvellous decoration for an interior, yet inviting inspection of every component part by its individual treatment of detail.

The same quality differentiates Constable from the Dutch landscape painters and brings him near to Rembrandt. Rembrandt, too, does not exhaust himself with the external motive, if indeed we can use such a term at all in connection with such a dramatist, to whom what has been said above of Shakespeare applies in a still higher degree. The objector, to whom the invention, &c., of the Biblical scenes is dear, need only think of the master's portraits of himself. In these, the most moving portraits of our era, conventional conceptions have but little part. We get no nearer to their character when we recognise a time-worn head in those of the later period, a younger face in the earlier examples, if we call them laughing or serious. What attracts us is the second face, seen outside the countenance, the materialised conception, which succeeds in immortalising the highest qualities of its creator in abstract images.

Constable, too, gave us portraits of himself in his landscapes, so intimate had every tree and every other detail become to him in his repeated contemplation of them as the reflections of his own moods. He felt himself as completely one with Hampstead or Dedham as Rembrandt had felt with his own face, and he succeeded in winning forms out of the practised concentration of his emotion. These are not, of course, so mighty as the vessel into which Rembrandt poured the fulness of his spirit, partly because they were distributed over a wider area. The almost painful focussing of power upon such a minimum of objective as Rembrandt saw in his mirror, eludes a less vigourous tension. Rembrandt was anchored fast upon one spot, the seething emotion of his spirit was directed to a single point. The relation of this emotion to the calm of the object gives the dæmoniac element which verges

on tragedy, even when genius emerges victor from the terrible conflict. No Constable makes this impression upon us. He holds himself and us in airier bonds. His task does not, like that of Rembrandt, transcend all our conceptions of the capabilities of an individual. His life was pettier and less remote from that of his fellows. But in his existence also we can trace the power which drives the individual to a never-resting self-expression, and the fruit has not suffered from the fact that the tree was closer to us.

Rembrandt's phases, from the first sketch to the finished picture, show increasing richness of power and breadth of structure. The same may be said of his whole development. His tendency is towards greater restraint and simplicity, a more determined rejection of the non-essential. A first survey of Constable's life work tempts us to see something of the same kind in him. He too gains breadth, as we shall show by particular instances, becomes more vigourous with years, and the broader form answers to a greater depth of conception. But his progress has not the unswerving tendency of Rembrandt's growth. It was less marvellous, though even in proximity with the giant the individuality of his being suffers no loss. The amazing thing in his case is a sudden knowledge, acquired in a few years, and in a partial concentration of his nature, to which we owe the unique quality of his sketches. But he does not manifest the same unbroken enrichment to the end. Whether, as his biographers declare, his marriage with a much loved wife determined the character of his art, it is difficult to say. Be this as it may, the term 1817–1828 is the most prolific in his career. The Rembrandtesque development is manifest down to the close of this period. But as I shall show, the decade that preceded his marriage brought to light his own scarcely surpassed riches.

But the relation of the English miller's son to his Dutch confrère is not confined to these abstract affinities. The painter who showed such coolness in his dicta concerning the great master, sometimes approached him very closely. It was indeed, perhaps, the conditional nature of his admiration which makes the relation valuable. There are landscapes by Constable which we cannot but describe as Rembrandtesque. They resemble, not Rembrandt's landscapes, but his portraits. The expressive vigour of the big brush-strokes with which the landscape is modelled, recalls the fashion in which the aged Rembrandt built up a face. I may instance Mr. Alexander Young's sketch of 1819 for the *White Horse*, the *Mill near Brighton* of 1828, in the South Kensington Museum, and kindred works. The form is not quite so pregnant as in Rembrandt's faces, the strokes do not carry quite so much. But here it is less a difference of power than a different system of division that manifests itself. Constable's pictures became more and more fluid, and they would not have fulfilled their task had not this fruitfulness of rain-soaked earth, unnecessary to Rembrandt's purpose, been suggested in them. This yields a further element of the synthesis accomplished by Constable.

RUBENS: MERCURY AND ARGUS

BRUSSELS MUSEUM

CONSTABLE AND RUBENS

Fuseli's jest as to the overcoat and umbrella required by the admirer of Constable's pictures referred to the dripping, fluid element in all his friend's best works, a quality quite alien to the Dutchmen, though they were guiltless of the terrible dryness characteristic of many English and German landscapes painted under their influence in the first half of the nineteenth century. Constable showed early indications of the quality which ensured the freshness of his pictures, and the great example of Rubens encouraged him to develop his own tendency. His reverence for the Fleming ran parallel with his love for the Dutchmen. His landscapes, as far as analysis reveals foreign constituents in them at all, contain both forces in equal measure. Rubens was the turbulent driving energy who drew him to the light, and who yet was no more able than Rembrandt to turn the head of one whose eyes were fixed so stedfastly on Nature. Constable inclined more to him than to Rembrandt, but after the manner of a Northerner, who, swiftly as his blood may flow, retains a certain sedateness. There was nothing in him which could follow the Italian element in Michelangelo's great successor, and here he was at one with Hogarth, but he recognised Rubens' clear intelligence behind his frenzied energy, and was attracted by the happy naturalism of the châtelain of Steen. Rubens taught him to take heed of blond tones, enticed him out of Gainsborough's woodland thickets into the open air, and encouraged him to invest the sunsets of certain sea-pieces with all the splendour of his palette. Such examples, in which the affinity seems perceptible even in the colour-scheme, are rare. The Louvre owns one of the best.* But the handling of the early period is the happiest result of intense preoccupation with the great master. I mean the exquisite suppleness of the brush, the power of reproducing the form of a detail to perfection by a winding stroke, and giving its light-value and its local colour. Later on, this downy softness gave way to a preference for fat, and preferably straight strokes. But reminiscences of Rubens still linger, if not in details, at least in the great outlines of composition.

Rembrandt seems to have had more influence on the sketches, Rubens on the pictures. The slanting motives in Rubens' landscapes suggested to Constable the development of a composition rich in diagonals, and his exemplar was especially serviceable to him where he had to reckon with detailed foregrounds and wide perspectives, as, for instance, in the lock-pictures, *The Lock*, *The Leaping Horse*, *Flatford Mill*, &c., and again in the series of works connected with the *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows*. The service was of an ideal kind and illustrates the felicity of all Constable's relations to the old masters. Our attention is not arrested by some accident in the model, reappearing under another form in the imitator,

* *Weymouth Bay.*—In an article on "The Representation of the British School in the Louvre" in the *Burlington Magazine* (p. 341, March 1907), by P. M. Turner, the genuineness of this picture is called in question, quite groundlessly, in my opinion On the other hand, the writer is perhaps justified in ascribing *The Windmill* in the Louvre to Webb. I also concur in the attribution of *The Cottage* (Louvre, No. 1806) to F. W. Watts (*Burlington Magazine*, July 1907, pp. 226, 227).

but we see the superiority of the old master revealed in the virtues of his disciple and this generalisation increases our respect for both. Constable took the brightness and lucidity of Rubens' motive as his pattern, the organisation that penetrates every detail and preserves the purity of the theme even in the greatest wealth of variations. Rubens ennobled his realism, and taught him to detail form, not object; it was his example which brought about that "absence of everything stagnant" over which Constable himself expressed his naïve creative joy in writing to his friend Fisher about *The Lock*.*

The Rubens cycle of the *Four Seasons* was as familiar to him as his own pictures. It was brought to England at the beginning of the nineteenth century, from the Palazzo Balbi, and to Constable's distress was here divided up into three portions. One picture, the beloved *Rainbow*, now in the Wallace Collection, was acquired by the Earl of Orford; the *Château de Steen*, now in the National Gallery, by Sir George Beaumont, and the other two went to Windsor Castle. It may seem over-bold to compare these manifestations of a lordly genius, who playfully expanded the surfaces confined within the limits of a frame, giving them the spacious splendour of fresco, and even here, where he was concerned with modest things, allowed his personality to overflow in still wilder exuberance than was his wont, with the pictures of the modern, which make no claim to be anything but landscapes. Nature, whom the one moulded with unprecedented force, more despotically than any after him, was approached by Constable with the reverent love of a son in the modest garb of a Hobbema, and it is against all probability that the expression of such a mind, however successful, could even approach the power of that subjectivity.

But setting aside the obvious difference in absolute potentiality of the two artists, the suggestion of such a possibility leaves out of account the necessary and beneficent evolution of time, which forbids any artist to measure himself in the closer sense with his predecessors. Constable could not pretend to equal Rubens with the gesture of a Rubens. That form was not an outcome of Rubens' power alone, but was also the gesture of a multitude. To this multitude, which in those days an artist could fire by vigourous action, Rubens made his appeal, winning strength for his performance from his confidence in the echo of his appeal. A Rubens in these days would be like an orator setting forth revolutionary ideas to empty benches. A modern artist of Rubens' power would not be rhetorical; he would find subtler modes of expression. This was Constable's method. The problem was to make the hidden effect as rich as possible. The solution could only come through a transposition of power, by employing organs of a work of art more or less independent of the vehicles of Rubensesque beauty. The Fleming's dominant effect lies in his modelling. This made a comparatively summary system of colour necessary. Rubens would have dammed the river of his forms if he had divided it into too many affluents by colour, and he would have become illegible. It is true that the richness of his pictures is not due solely to the play of forms; the part assigned to the palette is by no means negligible; but important as this is, it is the modelling which is decisive. The colour is a splendid, amazingly supple material, created on the palette, *i.e.*, outside the picture, with which Rubens moulded, as the sculptor moulds his clay. The colouristic variations may be compared to the reflections of some costly stuff, the appearance

* "My 'Lock' is now on my easel; it is silvery, windy, and delicious, all health, and the absence of everything stagnant, and is wonderfully got together." (Leslie, p. 173.)

RUBENS: AUTUMN, THE CHÂTEAU DE STEIN
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

of which changes according to the forms it has to cover. I crave indulgence for the crudity of a comparison suggested by my desire to make myself understood. Constable had from the beginning to renounce Rubens' play of forms. The tree, the river, the sky, all realities, were to him no relative conceptions, which could be made into pictures by modification of their forms, but things which had to substantiate the degree of his objective knowledge. Transmutation into an artistic system could only succeed by turning the natural connection between all things in a landscape to good account. Rubens looked at details at close quarters; in a wood he saw, not an inseparable whole, but a collection of trees, and he sought to give the illusion of multiplicity by the special elaboration of a tree or a few trees. He could only bring this product of units together by means of a conventional line. If, on the other hand, the painter, as the natural integral conception requires, took the landscape regardless of details, from a fixed point, masses arose which could not be limited by line. Line accordingly gave up its stylistic part to colour, or, to be more precise, to the coloured patch. On this Constable concentrated his whole art. He neglected modelling comparatively, created no arbitrary contours, but suppressed all he could renounce, and thus enriched the surface all the more. He modelled his spots of colour as Rubens had modelled his forms.

We recognise the principle as an eccentric as well as a concentric system in comparison to Rubens' method—eccentric in so far as Constable unloosed what Rubens held together, and concentric in so far as he gathered up into masses what the other had left scattered. Modern painting has worked out the system more and more completely. Constable himself demonstrated it in the most logical manner in his sketches. In his pictures we can recognise the difference of the two conceptions more in details than in the whole. The showy horses in the foreground of the later cathedral pictures are clearly the descendants of the Brabantine stallions who passed a contemplative life in the stables of the Château de Steen. Rubens painted his favourites as monuments, exaggerated their forms to colossal dimensions, and made it certain that every one who came across such a steed should always have the type in his mind's eye. The stable was but a frame for the colossus, and the landscape round his men and animals was almost the same to him. Even in the two pendants of the *Seasons* the horses appear as the incarnate life of Nature. They would be impossible, if we took them out of the picture; it would be dragged awry, the trees would fall; they seem to carry the whole landscape on their mighty backs. Constable too never neglected his accessory figures. The forms are not so colossal, but they are more compact; they belong absolutely to the landscape in which they are set, and to no other; but their relation to their surroundings is calmer, the structure more closely knit. The animals show less. The eye involuntarily hurries away from them to the gleaming water and the silvery trees. We take in fewer single motives; the sounds are softer and quieter. But rich chords are heard among these softer tones. I may give one instance among many. The red of the caparisons of the Flanders team is also always used for the draught horses of the valley farm. Rubens uses such red patches very often, just as Claude does, as decorative adjuncts. They lie flat, float upon the stream of his materia, and have the same value only that they have upon the palette. With Constable, on the other hand, the red becomes an important factor in the structure. He gives the colour a Rubensesque splendour by modelling the patch, and so evokes a new illusion of

reality inherent in the nature of the pictorial. For in Nature too we should, at the given moment, first note the red gleaming in the sun upon the horses, before we took in its form, and even afterwards this effect of colour remains important for the formation of our impression. Long before Constable, Hobbema had made the experiment, and had begun to turn it to account. Reminiscences of him are to be found in Constable's large pictures, often closely associated with traces of the Antwerp master.

The variation of the étoffage in *The Rainbow* and the *Château de Steen* incited Constable to essay a similar pendant for his various versions of *The Hay-Wain*. In the pictures of this name in the National Gallery and South Kensington, the waggon goes forth empty, as in the *Château de Steen*, whereas in the Cheramy version it returns, as in *The Rainbow*, heavily laden.*

It is not easy to decide which is the more attractive of the two compositions. In the famous London picture the planes are larger, the farm lies very picturesquely among the trees, and the pool with the cart gives a valuable richness to the foreground. In the much smaller *Hay Wain* in Paris, it is evident that the scene at the back of the farm was represented. Consequently, the haymakers loading the cart, who appear in the distance only in the National Gallery picture, are quite near here, and close the horizon with a fine group, its keynote a gleaming white. The painting has none of the cool silvery effect of the final conception; it is more akin to the large sketch at South Kensington, but it surpasses this in force of expression. The pendants give various modes of expression rather than external variations of the motive. In the London *Hay Wain* we have the idyl. The relation of man and Nature is expressed as one of life-giving peace. Rubens has disappeared; we see an inspired and ennobled Hobbema. Whatever the mood on entering the National Gallery, five minutes before the *Hay Wain* give calm and peace. In the Parisian picture Nature is nearer and more aggressive. The sun blazes. Men and beasts seem to bleed in the heat. Red mingles even with the brown of the twigs. Marvellous is the mighty vault of foliage over the cart, truly that "formidable cathédrale des constructions végétatives," with which Sensier compared Rousseau's trees. We seem to recognise Rubens' vigour in every twig, in every leaf, in every germ.

Constable built up another kind of mighty edifice with his clouds, which also reminds us of Rubens at times. His skies are the faces of his landscapes. They reflect the happenings on the earth below, translated into curves, and appear as the seat of the spirit who reigns, welding together the dismembered body beneath. "I have often been advised," he wrote to Fisher, "to consider my sky as a white sheet thrown behind the objects. Certainly, if the sky is obtrusive, as mine are, it is bad; but if it is evaded, as mine are not, it is worse; it must and always shall with me make an effectual part of the composition.†

Both obtrusiveness and neglect in the treatment of the sky are opposed to unity of composition. Constable's own words, no less than the praise accorded to his skies, even in his life, by critics otherwise hostile, seem to support the charge of obtrusiveness. There may be some truth in his self-reproach. But Constable generalised it over-hastily. In a hundred examples the sky is not too prominent by a single shade. At times the life-long habit of observation of the firmament, of the "source of light in Nature," may have led to an exaggerated materialisation

* Painted, no doubt, about the same time, 1821.

† Leslie, p. 104.

of the airy structure. But this defect does not injure the composition; rather does the decorative element in the picture gain therefrom; it is only the necessary difference between the consistence of the sky and that of the rest which suffers. Instances are to be found exclusively in the late period; the often painted *Stoke Church* is a very typical example. The white church seems to have been precipitated from the white mass of the clouds, a condensation of the wild element of the air. The local colour is restricted to differentiation of the white masses by imperceptible tones. The impasto, laid on almost entirely with the palette knife, is proper rather to modelling than to painting, and is brilliantly appropriate to the architectonic detail of the old cathedral. How remote is this Constable from Rubens' luscious handling! And yet even here, where the brush seems to have abdicated all its rights, in the juicy green-rimmed brown of the groups of trees, in the floating shadows, enlivened, where they are deepest, by the deliberate red dots, we trace something of Rubens' fluidity, yielding to the threatening solidification.

The strongly marked sky in such pictures made a greater emphasis of the earth necesary and so the whole became too robust, and the richness of the conception was lost. True, this defect is often redeemed by the unified power of the handling. In many cases, the most loaded among various versions of the same design is the happiest. This is true, for instance, of the pictures known as *Spring*. The motive is a field with peasants ploughing, a group of trees on the left and the mill—in which Constable himself is said to have worked—on the right. The first version is the little sketch of 1814 in the South Kensington Museum (No. 144), a correct but not very inspiring Nature-study. The same mill painted in Constable's last decade, and now in the Cheramy collection, is a much more animated work. Here the palette-knife usurps the function of the brush. The stormy sky is put in in broad masses. Great lumps of pure flattened white are veiled with dark cloudy configurations. On the left, the sky drops gradually lower and lower towards the ground. The earth is much slighter in structure than the convulsed cloud-vault. The proportion convinces absolutely. The particles of colour, akin to the widely opened pores of the humus, suggest the heavily breathing soil, expectant of relief. Coal-black are the fat, glistening clods, furrowed by the blood-red plough. Horses and man, even the mill, look small in the turmoil. They will soon yield the stage to the storm, which will plough up the earth more deeply than man's puny shares. The sky overpowers the earth in this picture, but not the form; and all that is "obtrusive" is the power of the element, which here makes heaven and earth its plaything on a small scale no less powerfully than on the vast scale of Rubens.

CONSTABLE'S SKETCHES

As long as attention is directed to the most important feature of Constable's work, his sketches will always arouse the enthusiasm they evoke in our own days. When I speak of the sketches, I mean, of course, to exclude those which were purely studies, a large number of which are preserved in the British Museum. Beside those we are considering here they are quite unimportant. As Lord Windsor says, Constable's sketches were not intended for the eyes of strangers, and never for sale.*

It was not until many decades after his death that the majority of them passed into collections. But this was the case with the works of many masters. What distinguishes them is that they are even free from the utilitarianism which the thought of his future picture imposes on the artist. They were not what is called the first idea of a work, a necessarily provisional form, which only reveals certain sides of the future picture. The slight importance Constable attached to the motive would have made the greater number of them superfluous, had this been so. Besides, every comparison of them with the pictures shows the absence of all essential relation between the two. The sketches were made for their own sakes. Their technique is peculiarly their own. Their form does not permit of completion. On the other hand, they cannot be classed wth the small pictures which Nasmyth, Callcott and others painted before and simultaneously. Even though the small examples of these artists are far superior to their larger works, they yet betray that dependence on the Dutchmen which reduced so many painters of their period to the status of epigoni. Constable's relation to the land of Hobbema seems, on the contrary, to disappear altogether in the sketches, and nothing is more conspicuously absent in them than the seductive nicety of the small Anglo-Dutch picture. He is never greater than here, and I say greater advisedly, for the particles of paint are much more roughly treated than in the pictures. The sketches were a kind of journal. That which is lacking in Constable's letters and written memoranda is richly supplied in these. Many of the little panels have a ticket on the back with the date and hour of execution. They were painted records of events which turned on atmosphere and light. The mode of these occurrences forced the easygoing painter to work with the utmost rapidity. The complexity of the phenomenon demanded a perfectly simple and legible handwriting.

Holland's sedate landscape painters had known nothing of such requirements. For them too Nature was the guide for art; they painted what they saw, each according to his temperament, but above all, they wanted to paint pictures. This was Constable's last consideration. Nor can it be said that he was urged on by his temperament. He seems to have been an equable man, unvexed by personal ambition. He behaved as inconspicuously as possible. Necessity urged him to follow after certain things which could only be obtained in this

* "John Constable," London, 1903, p. 188.

way. This necessity arose from the times, from the instinct of progress; the spur of research guided his brush.

With Constable the history of those factors that make for art-production—another history of development, which still awaits its chronicler—entered upon a new phase. His sketches are the first and most memorable steps of a painting which finds itself bereft of all the art vehicles of earlier ages. In the primitive epoch Nature was the corrective for tendencies which in themselves were completely independent of Nature. To the great realists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it was a new element which, above all, had to be reproduced. That which excluded a destructive literalness was not the will of the individual, but the prescriptions of the guilds. These lost their authority even in seventeenth-century Holland, and were entirely broken down by the French Revolution. For the new age the reproduction of Nature was the one artistic aim that remained. This purpose threatened to annihilate art as soon as it was achieved, because then the powers of the artist were robbed of their last discipline. We may take it that the degree of realism which Hobbema and Ruysdael offered in their conceptions of Nature, was not above the level that is now achieved by mechanical means, *i.e.*, that the art-stimulants arising from the Nature of their day would, relatively speaking, find satisfaction to-day in amateur photography. By this I do not of course mean that Dutch pictures might be manufactured nowadays by photographic processes. New requirements obviated such a danger. That which had stirred the longing of Ruysdael and Hobbema was outshone by aims which lay beyond the visible world of Dutch models, and so new inventions became necessary to the artist. Art obtained new stimulants.

Henry Richter, a little known contemporary of Constable's, wrote an amusing colloquy between Rembrandt, Rubens, Teniers, Cuyp and other great shades of the past, with modern artists of the author's period.* The conversation turns on the new discovery of daylight, the "plein air" painting of the period, and in spite of the calm proper to the ghostly disputants, we note the warmth with which then as now, the right methods are debated, the right colour, the right light, and everything else bearing on the thema, Nature. At the close, one of the living ventures to ask the illustrious dead what results they expect from the introduction of the newly discovered daylight into the pictures of the moderns. Rembrandt and Cuyp welcome it with effusive enthusiasm, and Cuyp even goes so far as to propose that instead of loan exhibitions of famous masters, there should be yearly demonstrations of honest studies of light with decent premiums and substantial purchases. Thus, at a relatively small cost a very valuable school for the study of colour would arise, in which laymen and artists alike might educate themselves in the knowledge of Nature.

The same demands will continue to be formulated with a little more or a little less naïveté in similar circumstances. We cannot conceive of development without this fiction. Art as an end in itself is of course conceivable objectively as a source of the highest joy apart from any purpose, but not subjectively, *i.e.*, in the hands of the artist. It is beyond our powers of conception that important persons can give themselves up to an abstraction with the intensity necessary for the creation of a work of art. The "expression of personality" is merely a paraphrase post festum. No artist of to-day feels the force that urges to such expression without a yearning after Nature. It was Nature, then, which inspired Constable. Hitherto

* "Daylight, a recent discovery in the art of Painting." Ackermann. London. 1817.

the intensity of his conception of Nature has been unsurpassed, and it is a question whether it could be greater. This applies not only to the domain of his art. We find nothing in the literature of his country that corresponds to his aspirations, nothing in that of contemporary France, far less of Germany. J. J. Rousseau's hymns to Nature are too essentially hymns even to suggest a like intimacy of relation. The letters of the youthful Flaubert, who was fifteen when Constable died, show the beginnings of such a spirit in poetry. Only in the time of an individual comprehension of art transcending that of every other epoch could Nature have been understood as it was by this great man. Even now the delicate bloom of the naturalism in Flaubert's letters is so unique, that it can be better defined by comparison with Constable than with a fellow craftsman. And in like manner the spirit in Constable's sketches seems to me to be better suggested by a comparison with the poet than by some parallel in art history.

That which places Constable's so-called finished pictures beneath the sketches, is the painter's respect for an obsolete guild prescription. It is no cheap respect, consciously speculative, but rather a slight fetter of instinct. Perhaps it was unavoidable. In his sketches Constable ventured upon things which we can readily believe required a new generation to make them into pictures. At the same time, I do not overlook the difficulty of distinguishing between Constable's sketches and his pictures, and, setting aside late pictures such as the *Cenotaph*, to formulate the difference clearly. The format is not always a criterion even for the highest quality of Constable. There are works considerably larger than the generality of his small pictures, which come very near in excellence to the most subtle of the sketches.

Two qualities characterise the sketches. A direct interpretation of Nature, of which it is difficult to speak unless the pictures are before one, and of which reproductions can give no idea ; and an effect I cannot, taking into account the poverty of our speech, describe otherwise than as decorative. The most effective element in both qualities is their association. The latest, and in particular the latest English art movement, has not accustomed us to the conjunction of decorative effects with naturalistic works, and hence the modern conception has arisen, that the decorative quality of a work of art is in proportion to its remoteness from Nature. The logical consequence of this idea leads to the wall-paper, and excludes painting as such entirely. In Constable, decoration is only that which also subserves the highest purpose of art, conception, the adornment of a surface within whose tiny bounds the cosmos manifests all its richness.

For the last few years, a number of Constable's sketches have been hanging in the National Gallery, in the corner of the room where the large examples are exhibited. They attract the eye as if they were so many lights, inviting attention, in spite of their small size, at a distance from which, in general, only large works would be noticed. We see nothing of the incident represented. The eye seeks them without consulting the mind, because they offer a most agreeable and beneficent surface. They produce the effects of a fine carpet, but surpass the textile in beauty by reason of their greater richness and variety. Just as a skilful jeweller is not only careful to procure costly stones, to produce harmonies with the colour-effects of the various parts, but also to have each stone so cut that it will show most fire and be employed to the greatest advantage, so Constable not only juxtaposed harmonious colour effects, but with palette-knife, brush, and

CONSTABLE: COAST SCENE

CHÉRAMY COLLECTION, PARIS

fingers formed each individual particle of pigment, and thus enhanced the splendour of the whole far beyond the given qualities of the material. And all this, not for the sake of splendour, for which no purpose can be imagined sufficiently lofty to exclude every thought of materialism, but in order to give an image of Nature in the shortest possible manner, a reproduction which is concrete, because it fixes a clearly determined section, yet is the highest abstraction, because at the same time it depicts not only a state but growth, less the moment than the forces that led to it. Such is the impression produced by the *Dedham Vale* in the National Gallery, or the Hampstead Heath sketch in the Cheramy collection—a flood of colour, the flaming vigour of which suggests I know not what mystical connection of the artist with the earth he represented. On the back he wrote after the date—9 August, 1823—" Stormy evening after a fine day. It rained all the next day." This means, that such was the impression made by Nature at that moment on a man of Constable's extraordinarily subtle senses. We feel as if he had been conscious of such variations of effect in the soil, and was himself part of the things he painted—nerve and quivering sensation rather than creator.

These little works might be more aptly called sketches of Nature than sketches for pictures, representations of elementary conditions divined rather than seen. In them the earth does not appear picturesque, though nothing non-pictorial has gone to the rendering, but active, a great procreative element, embracing all existence.

Of such sketches Constable produced hundreds. There is a whole roomful at South Kensington; they hang modestly on the staircase of the Diploma Gallery, and rouse high expectations of what is to follow in the rooms beyond. In the Tate Gallery they form almost the sole precious asset in the cargo of contemporary English art. On the Continent, Cheramy comes nearest to the English collections with a series of some thirty, for the most part brilliant works. Certain dealers in Paris and at Munich, have also formed collections of some importance. Among the Continental museums other than the Louvre, the Berlin Gallery owns two little landscapes on the Stour, not of the first quality, and the Munich Pinacothek a fine sketch of Hampstead Heath.

The variety of the sketches makes it impossible to classify them. We can group the large pictures according to technique, and trace a development therein, but this is impossible with the sketches. The most remarkable thing about them, especially in the middle period, is the conjunction of the carpet-like spotty effects with a gliding brush-stroke of the utmost softness. One or two little sea-pieces at South Kensington painted at Brighton in 1824, illustrate the rarer, more supple method very distinctly. It is shown even more richly in Cheramy's sea-piece, *A Coast Scene with Fishing Boat.* Here we are not reminded of De Vlieger or Van de Cappelle. Even the most refined works of these subtle masters have not the characteristic quality of Constable. Their substance is, roughly speaking, more material, thin rather than delicate. They set us at once in a tender atmosphere, and are content to extend this condition, not allowing us to co-operate in its creation. They give the anomaly of an effect of nature rather than an evidence of their power of creation. Constable suggests our contemporaries, and the best of these, Manet above all. Things like this little *Coast Scene* are the first evidences of that conception of Nature which we call Impressionism, and give indications of everything that Manet brought into the same domain, in nuce, of course, but the instances are by no means isolated or accidental. The period after the

years of apprenticeship, that of Constable's mellowest painting, which many connoisseurs prefer to all the rest, is rich in such indications. The *Bridge over the Mole* of 1807 in the Alexander Young collection, has a striking affinity with Corot's broad manner, which was adopted by the Impressionists. At South Kensington there are several pictures of medium size, unsurpassable models of that grace of modern brushing, which so easily makes us forget its fragility. No Whistler ever achieved the effect, half smears, half strokes, and yet perfect construction, of the landscape on the Stour (No. 325), with the boats in the foreground, and the vapourous silhouette of Dedham church on the horizon, or the powerful Nature built up of broad touches of the other landscape, *Flatford Mill.* To about the same time—1810—we owe the profile of a girl in the same collection, a work with which we should never have credited the painter of the tiresome portraits executed a few years earlier. It is a remarkable evidence of the master's comprehensive gifts. The flesh painting stultifies all our preconceptions of a landscape painter's art, and suggests that Constable might have become one of the great painters of women, if he had not preferred his trees and windmills. Here only do we note a connection between Constable and the famous school of his country. In this girlish profile there lurks a higher conception of the grace of him who immortalised the features of Lady Hamilton. There is the same virtuosity, modelling with the brush and dispensing with any preliminary drawing, but it has this advantage, that it does not arrest us as a tour de force. The delicately suggestive method is to be found also among the English masters of the eighteenth century, and it must be admitted that their traditional dexterity was helpful to Constable, but more serious than they, he did not make dexterity his aim. His purpose was not to give a summary idea of grace, but, as in his landscapes, to reflect Nature. It is not that the intention is nobler—as to this, there may be two opinions—but the painter's power of expression is greater. In this single head we see a new aspect of Constable; the impression we have received of his suppleness and tenderness, purified by the influence of Rubens, is deepened, and another experience is added to the rest. With the older English masters we are always marking time. And this difference does away with the affinity which the historian might infer from a certain similarity of technique. Our first impression, as we stand before this head, suggests, not Romney and his contemporaries, but Manet.* And the impression persists, although, on closer comparison with a head by Manet, we are surprised at the difference of character.

Constable was never younger than at this period. One can imagine nothing daintier than the little *Village Fair* of 1810 at South Kensington, the booths with the swarming crowd, whose liveliness of movement electrifies us, although we are quite unable to distinguish bodies, or even faces. So too he has depicted life in the Thames Docks in London with dots of colour that become animate. The persons in some of the Hampstead sketches are not much bigger than pin-heads. Three such dots in various colours constitute a group, a dozen a many-headed multitude; it is impossible to imagine greater precision than we evolve from what is shown us.

When Constable took over the helm, this pointillisme had already a glorious international history. The Canaletti owed it their rococo pictures. They, for their part, had not invented the technique themselves, although it suited them as if it had been made expressly for them. Canaletto's gifted friend, Tiepolo,

* The likeness has been pointed out by Holmes and other English writers.

was distinguished from his great predecessors by the fact that he expressed in dots what they had leisure to write down calmly. Italy would scarcely have discovered this technique without foreign intervention ; it was too alien to the old tradition of the land. Long before Tiepolo, it had been practised in Holland. The greatest of the Dutchmen had not disdained to beautify the ornament of his garments by its means. His successors developed the method, and Vermeer fashioned his canal out of sparkling dots. The Dutchmen who went to Italy both gave and received. They recognised the increase of charm to be got by combination with the richer colour of the Italians, noted the effect of the little luminous central groups in Claude's landscapes and the possibility of welding those isolated decorative details, which Claude looked upon as mere adjuncts and often had put in by other hands, into closer union with the rest. In many cases Claude polished the blue, yellow and red of the groups to smooth surfaces, letting them appear as if the light played about them rather than as luminous themselves, and placing them preferably in the cool shadow, where their delightful gesture provided plenty of variety. The Dutch were less careful, aiming rather at the vitality of the little figures than at their splendour. The greatest among them never used colour as decoration, but to enhance the naturalness of expression.

Canaletto had to choose between the two conceptions. He did not decide for either, but took with great taste from each. Belotto and certain anonymous imitators who cared more for the carnival delights of the moment than for the future of painting, sometimes reduced their pictures to a primitive dance of more or less rounded dots. Their mannerism is too gay and harmless to excite resentment. One, to whom the Muses had given all lovely things, brought a higher conception into the game. Guardi, with a truer pictorial instinct, checked the over facile rhythm of his great teacher and chose unity, intent at once on greater richness and more intimate connection. His well-built vessels laden with gaily coloured wares sail like stately spice warehouses on the Grand Canal. The little figures in the Piazza have all the rococo daintiness ; but the colour, more supple than in the pictures of his predecessors, not only clothes the multitude, but animates it. This is more sincere as art, and higher as taste. His arcades are as expressive as portraits, and far surpass the contemporary works of the French architectural painters. He gave back to the technique of dots (pointillisme) the relative importance bestowed upon it by the Dutch, but enriched it with all the results of the intermediate stages.

It is quite certain that the successes of these artists were not without their influence in England, to which country Canaletto paid a visit in 1746 that lasted two years. It is the home of many brilliant works of his school. The beautiful view of the Thames by an unknown English painter of the second half of the eighteenth century in the National Gallery (No. 1681) is not the only evidence of his influence. Guardi's traces are more easily followed. Constable's younger compatriot, Bonington, gave himself up unreservedly to the Venetian when he went to Italy on the conclusion of his years of study in Paris. Cheramy has two small views of the Piazza of St. Mark, one of which might be a free copy on a small scale of the beautiful Guardi formerly in the possession of the Princesse Mathilde.*

At this time Bonington had nothing to substitute for the golden tones of his prototype, and contented himself by replacing the costume and the whole spirit of the Venetian dix-huitième siècle with the costume of his period, not without

* No. 62 in the catalogue of the sale at the Hôtel Drouot, Paris, in 1904.

prejudice to the results. The impressionism of the exemplar makes way for a stiff frostiness, and the hard blue sky is a poor substitute for Guardi's magical atmosphere. It was not long, however, before Bonington threw off this allegiance for a nobler one. But until his early death, the landscapes of Guardi's school did him good service.

Whether Constable took the "glittering points" of which MacColl speaks in his chapter on Constable * from the same source is an open question. He was made of sterner stuff than Bonington, and was not so easily influenced. But I am inclined to think that the Venetians of the eighteenth century had some share in the reverence he accorded to their predecessors. Many of the small pictures attest this, Cheramy's sketch of the Isle of Wight among others. From a hill in the foreground a company of soldiers and women in holiday dress contemplate the landscape. The gay tints of the uniforms stand out with the brilliance of lightning against the blue-green of the vapourous landscape. The relation is yet more evident in the remarkable view of the Thames Docks in the same collection, where the boats are rendered by white dots upon the blue-gray water. In this little picture too, we recognise one of the many bridges to Whistler who, armed with Constable and Japan, returned again to Venice, to get a new note out of the instrument. In him the last echo of Canaletto, the master he placed above all others, died away.

Turner and the whole of the English landscape painters make use of the dot as an accent. Gainsborough had already applied it to his little blond sketches, which Constable diligently studied. For Turner they were a refuge, the means by which he sought to give his fantasies the handling of oil-pictures, an expedient which, however, never succeeded in concealing the character of the "large water-colours." Constable too, at the beginning of his career, had accepted the tradition of the English water-colour painters. From 1801 to 1806 he was a good deal under the influence of Cozens, whom he once declared to be the greatest of landscape painters, and more particularly of Girtin. The majority of the numerous water-colour drawings in South Kensington were painted in 1806, and represent Constable's most important production of this year. The coming master found in Girtin a counterpoise both against Claude and the Dutchmen, and a preparation for Rubens. After a short apprenticeship, during which he did not disdain to copy Girtin, and also painted works of his own which are scarcely distinguishable from those of the other, he began to subordinate the methods he had acquired to his new aims. Turner contented himself with transferring Girtin to canvas. Constable accomplished the amalgamation of the water-colour tradition, a valuable affluent of English art, with the main stream, because he did not allow one stimulant or the other to prescribe an artistic ideal to him, which would in either case have circumscribed his development, but applied the means to a better understanding of Nature. The *View of Windermere* of 1807 still shows traces of the water-colour, the arrangement of the masses and the summary character of the colour point to Girtin, more especially the background with the shrouded blue-gray plateau, on which the yellow light of the sun is striking. Girtin seems to have joined hands with Gainsborough. The dainty and appetising aspects of the scene come from the one, the romanticism of the sequestered shade from the other. The technique accentuates the dual character of the picture. The thin tones are powdered in all the illuminated portions with little

* "Nineteenth Century Art" (J. Maclehose, Glasgow, 1903), p. 74.

CONSTABLE: JUBILEE AT EAST BERGHOLT AFTER WATERLOO

CHÉRAMY COLLECTION, PARIS

colour-particles of various sizes. These dots produce variety, and give relief to a detail here and there which would otherwise be too shadowy, but their effect is not akin to that of the strokes and splashes in the pictures painted a few years later. Whereas later Constable's units resemble the words in a short sentence, the points here play the part of inter-punctuation, and many of them are like the dash by which emotional writers suggest unformulated ideas. In this picture, a very typical example of his early period, Constable approaches his contemporary compatriots. He never came so near to Turner again, more especially in the mountainous background, where the dainty details are evolved from a mysterious vapour, beneath a sky which is really "evaded," which gives little presage of the mighty vaults the later Constable was wont to build over his compositions, and is rather a convenient background than an organic part of the composition. The painter still seeks to surpass the aquarellist by his material. And yet the little work gives some indication of the master who was to come. It has none of Turner's theatrical frippery. The loose and indefinite character of the forms is due to lack of skill. We feel that the simplicity of this beginning will not be prejudicial to growth. The love of Nature, which is less at home in the mountains than in the quiet valley, which provided the red-coated oarsman in the boat, and the red-roofed mill in the shade of the wood, is of good augury. It is true that this unconvincing mill gives little promise of the later Constable's mill pictures.

Some few years later the sparkling points had become the eyes of his landscapes; they stood in the right places and regulated the whole picture. They lose their arbitrary and supplemental aspect, and are distributed with more semblance of inevitability. The sketches become sections, showing a deeper and more serious conception; the audacity of the youth becomes the resolution of the man. From about 1820 onwards Constable was completely master of his means, as far as the sketches are concerned. He worked in masses, and in a manner consonant with masses. His broad handling did not impair the animation we have noted in early sketches such as the *Village Fair* of 1810. But the piquant note gave way to stronger expression. The technique of Cheramy's *Jubilee at East Bergholt after Waterloo* recalls that of the wonderful sketch for the *Salisbury Cathedral* in the National Gallery (No. 1814), painted in 1831, and may have been executed a few years earlier. Constable witnessed the occurrence in 1824. In a public square surrounded by trees a many-headed crowd has gathered to see the hanging in effigy of the hated Corsican. The gallows rise beside a gigantic cream-white flag, and from it dangles a stuffed figure of Napoleon. Only the movement of the comical episode is recorded, nay, the movement seems to be itself the episode, the rhythm of the black and white multitude, of the flags, the trees, the clouds, even of the houses. He treats his fellow creatures yet more summarily in the many sketches for his inauguration of Waterloo Bridge in 1817. He tended more and more to a synthesis for the life of the cosmos, and to suppression of detail, under which head he conceived of man in landscape.

Much of this freshness is lost in Constable's large pictures. A great deal of the loss is hardly avoidable. Energy, making use of larger and more versatile forms, naturally loses in concentration what it gains in extent. But Constable's loss was not solely of this normal kind. It was at once larger and smaller. If we compare the finished picture of 1819, *The White Horse*, in the Pierpont Morgan collection, with Mr. Alexander Young's sketch, we can scarcely believe that both are not only by the same master, but of the same period—the same year indeed,

according to Holmes. Both are wonderful things. The finished picture is the greatest possible culmination of the work begun by the Dutchmen; an idyl of Nature with all the customary details, everything faithfully reproduced in perfect harmony, and we admire both the perfection and the wise economy which could give so many things, without letting them appear too numerous. The sketch bears the same relation to it as does a late Rembrandt to a Hobbema. All the typical character of Dutch landscape has been blown away. There are no details. Where the boat appears in the picture, stretches the mighty black mass of the trees. Even the chief motives are indeterminate. Whether the surface in the foreground represents water or dry land can only be said by one who remembers the picture. A few roofs in the background are the only concrete touches save the trees. But the mind of the spectator has long since flown over the keyboard of objective conception and rejoices in the splendour of the gigantic form, a world apart from delight in the reality of a boat, a tree, a pool of water. The truth of a symbol of earth and sky, of elementary forces, has been revealed to him. The knowledge that the same bit of Nature has served for model in both pictures is disquieting. We are uneasy at the anomaly of two such opposite forms of expression simultaneously used. The usual antithesis of sketch and picture does not cover it. The sketch in the Young collection and the Pierpont Morgan picture could never have borne the implied relation one to another. This anomaly increases the difficulty of deciding which of the two forms Constable esteemed more highly. We are tempted to call the Young picture poetry and the other prose, without getting to the root of the matter. For the prose of a poet who is also a master of prose will always reveal the peculiarities of conception shown in his verse. But in Constable's case we often have the impression that his works are not only by different persons, but due to different conceptions of the world. And the phenomenon is not diminished by the circumstance that the results of both conceptions are masterpieces.

Sometimes we shall decide unreservedly in favour of the sketches, especially in the works of the last period. Format and definition add nothing in these cases; the details are relatively obtrusive, the curt expression is lost. On the other hand, it would be unjust to condemn all Constable's later work as inferior. It comprises too many, if not of his finest, at any rate of his ripest works, in which there is scarcely a hint of failing powers. In a summary review such as the present, we shall have to admit that the last five years of his life contributed little to the great sum of his achievement, if we except one or two memorable works. He confined himself for the most part to transformations of existing works, and broke no new ground. His English biographers refer this cessation of creative activity to technique, and make his exaggerated use of the palette-knife responsible. They are so far right, that most of the later works are spread upon the canvas rather than painted. Whereas in his youth Constable began with the brush, and only used the palette-knife to give breadth to the brush, at certain moments in later life he began his compositions with the knife, and used the brush for ornamentation. He felt expression slipping away from him, and tried to indemnify himself by exaggeration of method. To preserve unity, he gave up the differentiation with which he had spoilt us in the beginning. The result was an increase of breadth without apparent justification, and, more frequently, an exaggerated spottiness. *The Cenotaph* of 1836, the year of Constable's death, is still brilliant, but we feel as if the artist's whole purpose had been exhausted with this material effect.

The glittering points of the leaves, used in former pictures for decoration, are the design itself here. In other examples, the mosaic seems to have been made for the sake of mosaic, never in the sketches, strange to say, where the decorative value might justify such exaggeration, but in the less decorative large pictures. We miss the breath of Nature under the large splashes of colour. Others again, such as the *Romantic House*, decompose the form which should have been poetised, and are far inferior to similar motives of the earlier period. And yet together with the *Romantic House*, at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1832, appeared the grandiose *Waterloo Bridge*, the résumé of a labour of many years, a work which in itself justifies revision of an over hasty verdict on the last period.

CONSTABLE AND THE PRESENT

That which is often made a reproach to critics of modern art, that they praise even the weaknesses of their heroes, is certainly inapplicable to our criticism of the first modern. We make relatively larger demands upon him than upon the average greatness of the transition period. A Wilson or a Gainsborough always fares better, because from the first they only keep us at a moderate distance from the normal, and we are apt to become too generous in our appreciations of the relative. We are inordinately grateful to Turner, when for once we find him productive, and all his braggadocio does not prevent us from believing him when for once he speaks the truth. Constable, who even in the weak moments of his last period is immeasurably superior to his fellows, we judge by his incomparable display of power, even in those hours of exhaustion when he can no longer offer us the same wealth of gifts.

But this criticism also shows the peculiarity of our attitude to its object. Constable has not yet become historical to us; we are so near to him, that we still watch every change in his fortunes with anxiety. We follow him like a favourite racehorse, and every little swerve wrings an exclamation from us. He will not become historical until our whole epoch has attained the platonic dignity of historical existence. This knowledge makes us cherish his qualities and his weaknesses as our own characteristics, gives us confidence in the course we are following, and sharpens our perception of obstacles. It also over-steps the limits set by nationality. All Constable's relations to his compatriots seem to us insignificant, as compared with the ties that bind him to that cosmos of modern art which was revealed by him, and is still growing. It may well fill every modern Englishman with joy to follow the course on which Constable accomplished the last and greatest portion of culture's task, the liberation of English art from rococo influences. His countrymen may be justly proud of the knowledge that the grandson carried out the promise of the grandfather Hogarth, to get Art from Nature, and that he gave a most fruitful interpretation to the gospel of "variety." But spirits still greater than his English predecessors were at work in Constable. Behind the shades of Hogarth, Wilson, and Gainsborough, rise Rubens, Claude and Rembrandt. This is the reason that both the foreigner and the cosmopolitan Englishman feel a sympathy with Constable more far-reaching than the sentiment rooted in the soil which he evokes in many of his fellow countrymen. We cannot say as much of any of his contemporaries in England. However much we may admire Crome or Wilkie, we are always conscious of a certain provincialism in them, which robs their speech of what may be called the classic, the universal accent. Constable's absolute, not his relative accomplishment, and even more the healthiness of his ideal, give him a place in the art-life of all progressive nations.

History bears persistent testimony to what I may call the Europeanism of

Constable. Like Hogarth, he left little trace in England. But if in Hogarth's case our regret at this is softened by our consciousness that it was not easy in his day to choose out the universal and permanent elements from the complexity of the manifestation, we are at a loss to explain England's relation to her greatest son. No benefit was derived from him during his lifetime. His fame was established by a few intimate friends. This is not very exceptional. But when he died, he ceased to exist for England, not only for the public but also for art. Not only did no one make use of his legacy, but with it his countrymen renounced the movement which had brought him forth. English landscape already existed when Constable appeared. What he added to it was enough to have made England at one stroke the leader of European art. One might have supposed that the generation which grew up with the picture of Waterloo Bridge would have felt irresistibly impelled to carry on what this work had begun. Nothing of the sort happened. Bonington was exhausted long before Constable himself laid down the brush, and even had he not been stricken down untimely, he would never have been the heir of Constable. He was unfitted for the office, not by incapacity, but by his tendencies. Links between the two were not lacking; Bonington once essayed a composition in the style of the *Hay Wain*, a *Hay Wain* of Italian origin. He was not of the same fibre. The picture of his housekeeper in the Louvre is the only one of his works which has the vigourous directness of manner characteristic of his great friend. It is not his supreme work, indeed, it has not even his typical qualities, his extraordinary delicacy of taste and his tender grace of touch and colour. But it might be possible to conceive of this as a bridge to Constable and beyond him. It remained an isolated effort. The true Bonington threw in his lot with the French colourists who hailed from Venice, and from that Rubens who invented flesh-painting—not from him who dwelt among peasants and horses in the Château de Steen. In that room of the Wallace Collection where the relations between Prudhon, Delacroix, Decamps, Isabey, Diaz and Meissonier are as evident as if they had worked in the same studio, the unique collection of Bonington's works is in the right place. No one would take them to be the work of an Englishman of Constable's school. The gaily coloured costumes common to Bonington, Wilkie, and Etty, show his Anglicism in no very favourable light.

William Müller mingled an insipid romanticism with Constable's gravity, and made clever sketches with a skill as remote from his prototype as Dantsic from Bergholt. In our own times again an Anglo-German—Muhrmann—has made essays in Constable's manner.

But apart from this Anglo-Frenchman and German-Englishman nothing remains of Constable in his native land. Bürger noticed the sterility of his influence in England,* and Lord Windsor, who quotes the passage, remarks that this may have been true in Bürger's time: "Up to 1860 there is little evidence of Constable's influence, and though there is plenty of it now, it has come less directly from him than coloured, as it were, through French spectacles." †

This "plenty" seems to reduce itself to one instance, that of the Anglo-American Whistler, whose ephemeral relation to Constable will be examined in a subequent chapter. With this hardly legitimate exception there has been nothing in the last forty years to modify Bürger's pronouncement. To accept Holmes'

* "Histoire des Peintres." 1863.
† "Constable." 1903.

demonstration of a following in contemporary England, one must either be an Englishman, or have little perception of Constable.*

What his fatherland neglected was taken over by the Continent. Strange as this neglect may seem, the rapidity with which Europe assimilated Constable is even more remarkable. The movement began in Paris. France had the necessary conditions for the part. Not the culture of her painters—this sprang from a tradition alien to Constable and was rather of a nature to make her hostile to him—but a purpose. France needed what Constable had to give. The Empire had driven out the rococo with violence and had created a condition answering to an abnormal state of national excitement, which could only be prolonged by the decorative requirements of an Imperator. The intensification of revolutionary ideas which had crowned the eighteenth century, could not subsist after Napoleon's abdication, and was fain to seek the basis of an art in harmony with the portion of the race that was capable of development. At this moment it was discovered what had arisen on the other side of the Channel, an art following after Nature with the utmost independence. Archæology had not been superseded there; it seemed never to have troubled any one seriously. Results even more brilliant than those of David had not succeeded in concealing the mechanical nature of an artistic doctrine, the exact opposite of which was flourishing in England. Freedom, the dream of the young generation, had long been a normal form of artistic practice there, and it was made clear to the disinherited, that it was possible to paint without the receipts that had been lost in the Revolution, and also without those new ones whose author had been driven out in 1816 with Napoleon. This enormous difference between the tendencies of the two nations must be borne in mind, if we would understand the hymns of praise sung by Frenchmen to English painters of the second rank. The tendency was so astonishing to them, that they had no leisure to criticise its exponents. The young Frenchman saw the traditional English freedom with eyes sharpened by enthusiasm. Not only did contemporaries paint on national principles; their fathers and grandfathers had done the same, and what they had left undone, what, it might be hoped, could be done better, was a further cause for gratitude in those who came after. The doctrine, like all logical ideas, was more effectual than the example.

Bonington was one of its disseminators. The friend of Géricault and Delacroix, with the suggestive faculty of a delicate susceptibility, conscious of the advantages derived from a mixture of French and English culture in his own works, he was able both by his words and by his works to forward that rapprochement of the two nations, so often realised in the eighteenth century. Géricault was the first to take the journey to London. In a letter of May 6, 1821, he wrote to his friend Horace Vernet, that his (Vernet's) talent lacked nothing but "d'être trempé à l'école anglaise." His enthusiasm for the Royal Academy Exhibition was unbounded. "Vous ne pouvez pas vous faire une idée des beaux portraits de cette année, d'un grand nombre de paysages et de tableaux de genre, des animaux peints par Ward et par Landseer, âgé de dix-huit ans: les maîtres n'ont rien produit de mieux en ce genre; il ne faut point rougir de retourner à l'école; on ne peut arriver au beau dans les arts que par des comparaisons. Chaque école a son caractère. Si l'on pouvait parvenir à la reunion de toutes les qualités, n'aurait on pas atteint la perfection? . . . . Je faisais à l'Exposition le vœu de voir placé dans

* "John Constable," Holmes, p. 205.

notre Musée une quantité des tableaux que j'avais sous les yeux. Je désirais cela comme une leçon qui serait plus utile que de penser longtemps. Que je voudrais pouvoir montrer aux plus habiles même plusieurs portraits qui ressemblent tant à la nature, dont les poses faciles ne laissent rien à désirer, et dont on peut vraiment dire qu'il ne leur manque que la parole. Combien aussi seraient utile à voir les expressions touchantes de Wilkie (he writes Wilky). Dans un petit tableau, et d'un sujet des plus simples il a su tirer un parti admirable. La scène se passe aux Invalides ; il suppose qu'à la nouvelle d'une victoire, ces vétérans se réunissent pour lire le bulletin et se réjouir. Il a varié tous ses caractères avec bien du sentiment. Je ne vous parlerai que d'une seule figure qui m'a paru la plus parfaite et dont la pose et l'expression arrachent les larmes quelque bon que l'on tienne. C'est une femme d'un soldat qui, occupée de son mari, parcourt d'un œil inquiet et hagard la liste des morts . . . Votre imagination vous dira tout ce que son visage décomposé exprime. Il n'y a ni crêpes, ni deuil ; le vin au contraire coule à toutes les tables, et le ciel n'est point sillonné d'eclairs d'un présage funeste. Il arrive cependant au dernier pathétique comme la nature elle-même. Je ne crains pas que vous me taxiez d'anglomanie ; vous savez comme moi ce que nous avons de bon et ce qui nous manque."

We are not surprised to find that at this primitive stage of perception Géricault had no word of appreciation for Constable's *Hay Wain* which appeared for the first time at this exhibition. True, this may have been due to the recipient of the letter, to whom the anecdotes of the English school would certainly have appealed more than its loftier flights. But that the painter's instinct had already left the secondary phase of such interest far behind is shown by the noble pictures of the Epsom races painted this year, especially by the little gem in the Louvre, in the brilliant freshness of colour and touch of which the best art of England manifests its vivifying influence. Among Géricault's figure-subjects, painted with flaming red touches, the magnificent head in the Eissler collection at Vienna shows this influence the most clearly.

At the instance of their young admirers in France, the Englishmen made their first appearance at a Paris Salon in 1824. The exhibitors were Bonington, who had been seen there before, Constable, Lawrence, Copley Fielding, Thales Fielding, Harding and William Wyld.* Constable, with his *Hay Wain*, his *Lock on the Stour*, and one of his small Hampstead Heath pictures, was hailed at once both by friend and foe as the leader of the invasion. The opponents were, of course, in the majority. The coarser spirits were represented by the anonymous critic who summed up all objections to the *Hay Wain* in the famous comparison of the sponge soaked in colour and thrown at the canvas. The opinion of the more moderate found utterance in the criticism of Stendhal, who, while admitting the merits of the works, regretfully pointed out their lack of idealism, or in the more drastic phrase in which it was asserted that these hymns to Nature were beautiful, but "meant nothing." Constable was much amused, and quoted a phrase of Northcote's against the Parisians : "They know as little of Nature as a hackney coach-horse does of a pasture." Some intelligent persons of Delacroix' circle divined that the performances of the English visitors would leave permanent traces. They had shared the spontaneous reaction of the young painter of the *Massacre de Scio*, who, swiftly making up his mind, essayed to turn the new

* Bazalgette enumerates the pictures in his preface, and gives an interesting selection from the Parisian criticisms.

experience to account by adopting Constable's method of division in his lately finished Salon picture. I shall try in a subsequent chapter to show the further consequences of the impression in the whole development of the French leader. Delacroix waxed enthusiastic not only over Constable, but over the novelty of the whole English school, even though he did not go quite so far as Géricault. His letters from London in 1825 show that he remained the Frenchman in England. "L'Angleterre me semble peu amusante," he writes to Pierret: "Il n'y aurait qu'un motif bien puissant comme, par exemple, d'y faire des affaires qui pût m'y retenir." *

He thought highly of Lawrence: "La fleur de la politesse et un veritable peintre de grands seigneurs;" still more highly of Wilkie, especially in his sketches —"il gâte régulièrement ce qu'il fait de beau"—but gives the palm to Bonington, Turner and Constable. With Bonington, whose acquaintance he had already made in 1819, he shared a studio after returning from England, and the companionship was not unprofitable to him. "J'ai eu quelque temps Bonington dans mon atelier," he writes to Soulier in 1826. "J'ai bien regretté que tu n'y sois pas. Il y a terriblement à gagner dans la société de ce luron-là, et je te jure que je m'en suis bien trouvé." Later on he found occasion to modify, not his sympathy with the man, who always remained dearer to him than any other Englishman, but his admiration for the artist. He recognised the danger of dexterity in Bonington's "touche coquette.". . . "Sa main l'entrainait, et c'est ce sacrifice des plus nobles qualités à une malheureuse facilité, qui fait déchoir aujourd'hui ses ouvrages et les marque d'un cachet de faiblesse comme ceux des Vanloo." † His admiration for Lawrence also cooled in time. In a letter of 1858 to Th. Sylvestre he speaks of "l'exagération de moyens d'effet qui sentent un peu trop l'école de Reynolds." ‡ His riper opinion of Turner, whom at first he had ranked with Constable, I have already recorded. On the other hand, his relation to Constable—"homme admirable, une des gloires anglaises"—remained unaltered, and it is a testimony to the sincerity of the great Romanticist, that the fundamental differences of their natures did not prevent him from recognising the essential community of their conceptions, and profiting by it. As far as I know, they never became better acquainted. Constable had no organs for the characteristic manner of his admirer, and Delacroix' complex mind could find out no other relation to him than the impression he had worked out so logically on first seeing the *Hay Wain*. The advantage he derived is set forth in a phrase: "Constable dit que la supériorité du vert de ses prairies tient a ce qu'il est composé d'une multitude de verts différents. Le défaut d'intensité et de vie à la verdure du commun des paysages, c'est qu'ils la font ordinairement d'une teinte uniforme;" and he adds: "Ce qu'il dit ici du vert des prairies peut s'appliquer à tous les autres tons." §

The whole secret revealed to him by the *Hay Wain* lies in this reflection, and all he had to do thenceforth was to carry out the variations of the principle in his own spirit. If we look upon the basis of these variations as the thema which has persisted from Delacroix to the pioneers of Impressionism, we cannot but recognise in Constable the father of modern painting, if it is to have a father at all. That he left his children and grandchildren enough to do has been shown

* "Lettres," p. 82.
† "Journal," ii. pp. 278, 279. He tempered the severity of this judgment later on, *cf.* iii. p. 188.
‡ "Lettres," p. 295; *cf.* also "Journal," iii. p. 377.
§ "Journal," i. p. 234.

DELACROIX: PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST

LOUVRE, PARIS

by the results. These are so various, that the tracing back of them all to one pair of eyes is only permissible in the sense which circumscribes and completes all speculations touching the personal origin of impersonal facts. With comparatively slight reservations, we may see in Constable the leading spirit of the landscape school of 1830. By this I mean the men who applied themselves exclusively to landscape, above all Rousseau, Dupré and Daubigny. Paul Huet may perhaps be looked upon as the first of this generation. He had been a friend of Géricault's since 1822, and was one of Bonington's comrades in Gros' atelier. Constable's friend, William Reynolds, who engraved *The Lock* and painted with some talent, influenced him, even before he had seen Constable's works himself. Huet's pictures in the Louvre are of his late period, writing of which in his journal Delacroix said: "Ce pauvre Huet n'a plus le moindre talent; c'est de la peinture de vieillard, et il n'y a plus l'ombre de couleur." * But there are some small pictures painted about 1830, which partly explain the enthusiasm of Mantz, Alexandre Decamps, Bürger and others, who hailed him as a pioneer. Earlier still Georges Michel had come under the influence of the English landscape school, but his life was too lonely to propagate it, and he himself got no further than a sincere but colourless feeling for Nature. Both translated the English manner rather than Constable into French. In him they saw more what he had in common with Crome and others than his personal qualities, and they themselves were not sufficiently individual to add anything. From these early disciples to Manet and Monet, we can trace an ever deeper appreciation of Constable's programme, or rather of his effects, an appreciation that gradually shook off the accidental element of the first discovery, and aimed increasingly at the universal. We may compare the development with the perspective of a well-formed bay to the open sea, and so recognise not only Constable's fertilising influence, but also the achievements of his successors.

With Rousseau, the shore was still comparatively near. Sensier, a victim to that biographic mania which refuses to allow any relation between the hero of the tale and the rest of mankind, and perhaps also dazzled by the later Rousseau's extraordinary versatility, attempted to deny any sort of connection between his friend and Constable. † Rousseau, born in 1812, exhibited the first results of his nature-studies in 1831, showing how much he had profited by the works of the old Dutch masters. In 1832 he saw Constable, and we find the date 1833 on one of his finest early works, the large landscape of the Kucheleff collection in the St. Petersburg Academy (No. 308). The whole arrangement, the little hillock, the cart with the red-capped peasant, at once recalls the *Hay Wain* and similar pictures, and also shows differentiation as compared with the Dutchmen, of whom we have in this same gallery a very typical example in the Constable manner, the Hobbema with the mill beside a pond. The division of the colour, by means of which Rousseau was afterwards to approach the Impressionists, is inconceivable without Constable, both in the Petersburg picture and many other examples. It is true that we are also astonished here by the primordial Gallic quality in Rousseau, the passion that breaks like a cry of Nature out of this very truthfully treated landscape. This was lacking in Constable, and this is why he sometimes seems tame beside Rousseau.

* "Journal," p. 377. What he wrote to Huet later about the *Inondation* now in the Louvre was merely a civility to his old friend.

† "Souvenir sur Rousseau." Paris. L. Techner, 1872.

Dupré will, I fear, lose in importance as Constable becomes more popular. The exaggerated prestige of the school of 1830 should be discounted mainly in his direction. It is scarcely comprehensible nowadays that there was a time when his reputation was much above that of the great Englishman. Daubigny, the youngest of the generation, went farthest in turning the heritage to good account. Constable's most decisive influence on modern landscape manifests itself first in his vigourously brushed planes. Rousseau and his circle had restricted themselves to the pictures. Daubigny and his immediate followers worked out the hints given in Constable's sketches and transposed them to large canvases. The result was a new kind of picture. It is only now, watching the successors of Manet and Monet at work, that we are beginning to get some idea of the extent of this new conception.

Constable's connection with French painting brings him into the closest relation with the development of European art. There is hardly a serious school of painting of the nineteenth century which has not some secret link with him. On the other hand, his influence outside of France was almost as insignificant as in his native land. In Germany we find isolated traces of him, without any important results. The little nature studies of Dahl, to whom German landscape of the early nineteenth century owes a good deal, have a certain likeness to the Constable sketches of the middle period. Blechen and Fearnley come nearer to the Bergholt master. Blechen's little sea-piece with the lonely spectator on the shore, in the Berlin National Gallery, might almost pass for a Constable, and there are one or two small works by Fearnley at Christiania in the same manner. But I can find no trace of a direct relation in any one of these cases. Dahl left Copenhagen in 1818 for Dresden. He meditated a journey to London, but this, according to his biographer A. Aubert, never came to pass. His characteristic studies began about 1820. Fearnley frequently came into contact with Englishmen, but according to Aubert, not till 1832 in Italy, where he may certainly have seen pictures by Bonington and Turner. When he came to London several years later, he greatly admired Turner. *

His most important Nature-studies, as, for instance, the *Scharfenberg*, are dated 1829, and are sufficiently explained by the influence of his master, Dahl. Blechen, too, came into frequent contact with Dahl at Dresden, and failing any evidence that works of Constable's were exhibited in Germany before 1830, he too must be reckoned among the disciples of Dahl. It is true there are various indications that the fame of the *Hay Wain*, after setting Paris in a ferment in 1824, had penetrated to Germany. Did the Hamburg painters, Wasmann and Morgenstern, arrive at their joyous landscapes alone, or by the intervention of Dahl? Was that Impressionist-in-little, C. F. Gille, who has left us charming studies dated 1833, indebted to Fearnley or to a greater artist? and is the early promise of Achenbach sufficiently explained by his acquaintance with a painter so little sure of himself as that same Fearnley, with whom he went to Norway in 1839? The exhibition of Constable's works in a Berlin hotel, vouched for by Menzel in a conversation with Tschudi, took place before 1845. What the best German painter of the period owed to this contact I have tried to show in another work.† But this exhibition, which Menzel eagerly studied, was certainly not the first

* In the collection of Hofjagermeister Fearnley, of Christiana, there is a little picture of Turner on varnishing day, 1837, at the Royal Academy.

† "Der junge Menzel." Insel Verlag. 1906.

opportunity the Germans had had of reckoning with Constable. Beyond a doubt, the Munich landscape-painter, August Seidel, had seen Constable. His compatriot and contemporary, Anton Teichlein, was not unmoved by the example of the Englishman. Of course here, as in so many other cases, Constable's influence was mingled with that of the Fontainebleau masters, who were known to the German public before their great instigator.

In Vienna Constable was better appreciated. A school, which even in the eighteenth century was an important offshoot of England, and owed much to Lawrence and Wilkie at the beginning of the nineteenth, no doubt paid homage to the greatest English master. It is true that the genre-pictures attracted most attention. Amerling, Danhauser and Fendi, who were in close touch with English art, were never able to make up their minds to give free rein to their inclination for landscape, and Waldmüller, whose fresh renderings of the district round Vienna sometimes recall Constable, did not, as far as I know, make acquaintance with the master's pictures till later.

Constable never knew the glory of the conqueror, and even after his death remained a quiet spirit. He lacked the kindling quality of astounding personalities. His art was too well organised to attract attention from afar; it had that simplicity of perfection, which repels the public and the public's painters; it was too thorough, too free from the picturesque, to awaken that astonishment which smoothes the way for enthusiasm. His gift attains the abstract purity of the scientific fact, and its benefits are so universal that the giver is scarcely remembered.

FROM DELACROIX TO COURBET

EUGÈNE DELACROIX

Wir sind vielleicht zu antik gewesen
Nun wollen wir es moderner lesen.
GOETHE.

To write adequately about Delacroix would be to relate the whole history of modern art. If I devote but one short chapter to him here, it is partly because the whole compass of this work would be not too great to appreciate him worthily, partly, indeed, because my book deals with little else but the results of his art and of his ideas. The brief notes that follow are designed merely to call the reader's attention to certain important aspects of Delacroix' art, on which I shall dwell in greater detail elsewhere, in connection with other artists. He lurks in all of them. Just as there is a touch of Goethe in most of the poets of the nineteenth century, so Delacroix was the spirit who communicated some particle of himself to all the important painters of his age. Yet no great Frenchman is so little appreciated out of France. To appreciate him fully it is perhaps essential to be a Frenchman. No German gallery owns any of his works. Thanks to the English colourists of his day, he is somewhat better known on this side of the Channel. There are a few good pictures by him in the Wallace collection, and in the Ionides collection at South Kensington. But even here his art has never been seriously considered. His compatriots undervalued him, even after he had become famous. He had a great deal more than passion and rhetoric, and, indeed, I am not sure that the latter-day cynics who question the reality of his pathos are not more right than they suppose, and that the heart whose wild pulsations we seem to feel in his pictures was not associated with a perfectly cool head. The hasty judgment that ascribes everything to the familiar dæmon, is as erroneous in his case as in that of many another great man. The important thing to realise is that he had a great intellect, that he was cold enough to evolve a rational standard from his wishes and emotions, warm enough to soar above this standard by his power. He could paint. He grasped at mighty things; Dante spoke to him before his beard had grown. There was need of this mighty force to strike down Classicism, which threatened to become a draughtsman's speciality. Painting needed the impetus he gave it to carry it along into our century. And he it was who laid that tragic element in its cradle, with which it is struggling for life to-day.

We may say perhaps that he was the last great painter who was a man of profound culture. We stand before his earliest portrait of himself and are thrilled by the painting, astounded at the energy of the brushing and also of the face it has evoked.

Of his private life I will only say that he wrote marvellous letters, and kept a journal which should be a sort of Bible for young painters.

Enthusiasm is clarified by contemplation of Delacroix. For George Sand and

DELACROIX: FRAGMENT FROM THE MASSACRE OF SCIO, 1838

CHÉRAMY COLLECTION, PARIS

Musset and finally for Baudelaire, who got nearer to him, he was so essentially romantic suggestion, from which they drew vigour for their own achievements—Chopin, too, owed him several inspirations—that his deepest artistic meaning escaped them. He was not unconscious of this himself, and spoke of George Sand much more coolly than she of him. He had a great respect for Madame de Staël. Baudelaire, to whom he had every reason to be grateful, he treated with the elaborate courtesy characteristic of him, and was much more intimate with the philosopher-painter, Chenavard, Ingres' pupil, whose culture seemed to him more profitable than that of the other. He had the natural repulsion of a man of trained intellect to the frenzies of undisciplined emotion, and knew himself to be by no means a *Fleur du Mal.**

His life-long endeavour was to find a conventional language, which should nevertheless be capable of fettering his strong expression. He worked daily at the technique of this language, and it was as laborious to him as the invention of his design was easy. In his facility of dramatic utterance, he was a Romantic, but when his mighty mind had taken its rapid flight through space, the faithful workman followed after, smoothing with almost bourgeois exactitude the road which his lightning invention had struck out in the new domain. That which exhausted him and made him the sick man who wasted one-third of his time in order to make himself capable of working in the other two-thirds, was not the unhealthy intoxication of an over-heated imagination, but the terrific energy of a worker who hated nothing so much as the slovenly technique of modern art, and who strained every nerve, to give the unconscious forces of his genius the most conscious form imaginable. A perfectly simple, cool-headed man, who loved music, not because it is the most purely sensuous art, but because it affords the purest conventional form. He refreshed himself with Mozart, was never quite able to convert himself to Beethoven, abhorred the modern French composers, and was the first to condemn Wagner.

* "Delacroix, lac de sang, hanté de mauvais anges
Ombragé par un daïs de sapins toujours vert
Où, sous un ciel chagrin, des fanfares étranges
Passent comme un soupir étouffé de Weber."
BAUDELAIRE, "Fleurs du Mal."

As far as I can remember, Delacroix never made more than a passing reference to this enthusiastic adherent in any of his numerous notes and letters. I remember, however, what he once wrote in his journal at Dieppe, when Chenavard had been lamenting to him: "Il me semble toujours que cette qualité de philosophe implique, avec l'habitude de réfléchir plus attentivement sur l'homme et la vie, celle de prendre les choses comme elles sont et de diriger vers le bien ou le mieux possible cette vie et nos passions. Eh bien, non! Tous ces songeurs sont agités comme les autres, il semble que la contemplation de l'esprit de l'homme, plus digne de pitié que d'admiration, leur ôte cette sérénité qui est souvent le partage de ceux qui se sont attelés à une œuvre plus pratique, et à mon avis plus digne d'efforts. . . .

Il me trouve heureux, et il a raison, et je me trouve bien plus heureux encore, depuis que j'ai vu sa misère. [He is speaking of Chenavard.] Sa désolante doctrine sur la décadence nécessaire des arts est peut-être vraie, mais il faut s'interdire même d'y penser. . . .

Un homme vit dans son siècle et fait bien de parler à ses contemporains un langage qu'ils puissent comprendre et qui puisse les toucher. . . . Ce qui fixe l'attention dans ses ouvrages n'est pas la conformité avec les idées de son temps: cet avantage, si c'en est un, se retrouve dans tous les hommes médiocres qui pullulent dans chaque siècle et qui courent après la faveur en flattant misérablement le goût du moment; c'est en se servant de la langue de ses contemporains qu'il doit, en quelque sorte, leur enseigner des choses que n'exprimait pas cette langue, et si sa réputation mérite de durer, c'est qu'il aura été un exemple vivant du goût dans un temps où le goût était méconnu."

This same being was so susceptible to sound, that he had the "Divine Comedy" read aloud to him with a strong accentuation of the rhythm while he was painting his Dante picture, and was almost magnetised in the process. A very complex intellect, estimating Shakespeare and Calderon as mighty savages, capable of painting with vulgar details, and at the same time of saying immortal things about the nonsense of exaggerated local colour, which might have been aimed at the modern naturalism of German literature; take him all in all, a universal genius, and therefore a universal artist too. Ingres sought for universal line; he made an experiment that was bound to fail, and that will never lose the character of the abnormal, using the term in the most favourable sense. Delacroix was not only his pictorial opposite, but a richer, more picturesque entity, to whom the whole world was fused in magic tints; whose mind was open to all impressions, no matter whence they came, and in whose life and works the whole first half of the nineteenth century is marvellously reflected. He showed himself a modern, for whereas Ingres specialised, he did his utmost not to appear as the master of one particular genre; he reminds us of Goethe, and this in spite of his having painted Götz von Berlichingen! Affinities rarely appreciate each other, he had very little veneration for the poets who provided him with themes; Walter Scott seemed to him hardly less important than Shakespeare and Goethe; he found pictures in all three, and preferred Ariosto to them all, because it is impossible to take anything away from Ariosto.* This wholesome nonsense, to which we find parallels in Goethe, also tended to preserve him.

His coolness of judgment gave him a right perspective in considering his own art. His master Rubens was the only being concerning whom he did not change his opinion throughout his life, and in whose praise he waxes fervid. There were moments when Rubens engulfed him, notably in the large easel-picture, the *Death of Sardanapalus* in Baron Vitta's collection, painted shortly after the *Massacre of Scio*, and still more evidently in the fragment of the same picture, belonging to M. Cheramy, the florid, luscious colour of which is difficult to explain when we compare it with that of the *Massacre*. And just as we prefer certain of Rubens' small sketches to certain of his great pictures, so, for the same reasons, we are inclined to rank the exquisite little study of the whole composition (also in the Cheramy collection) above both the large picture and this masterly fragment.

Delacroix saw how Rubens and his predecessor Michelangelo had achieved their grandiose effects, namely, by the exaggeration of certain proportions, and he understood that the imitation of such heroes must lead to decadence. He saw this degeneration—as did the classicists, though on somewhat different grounds—in the French art of the eighteenth century, to which he was not only unsympathetic, but antagonistic. Watteau was the only artist of the school for whom he felt some indulgence in later life; he never mentions Fragonard. He had nothing of the Fleming in him; Rubens showed him how to achieve the grandeur of Italian composition without foregoing vigorous expression. Frans Hals was almost unknown to him. He was a Latin, a Frenchman akin to those who looked on when Primaticcio painted Fontainebleau for Francis I. He loved Poussin.

In Delacroix we see what race bestows on the individual. The Germans, and later, the English went to Italy and came home to paint literature. Delacroix

* "Journal de Delacroix."

GÉRICAULT: SILENUS (DRAWING)
MARCILLE COLLECTION, PARIS

was never in Italy; all he possessed of her was what she had given to France. The Renaissance had parted into two currents; two sisters, the second of which, though so much the younger, was not the less like her senior. A dweller in France knew what Italy was like. The Renaissance here had been less a conquest than a restoration; it dropped the first syllable, and was beginning and continuation in one.

It is nevertheless regrettable that Delacroix never carried out his intention of visiting Venice. He only knew Titian and Veronese; at Venice he would not only have made the acquaintance of Tintoretto, but he would have recognised the relation of all these artists to their age, and would probably have discovered that his connection with his own was less complete. He had the Latin racial instincts; they were at once his strength and his weakness. No less than Prud'hon or David, he felt that Watteau's tradition carried certain dangers in its train. He was right. Boucher and his disciples had not the vitality to make our art fruitful. They stood and fell with their time, from whose style they sprang, symptoms of a very individual epoch, but not themselves individuals. Fragonard's colour had always too much of the nimble dexterity of the decorator, as soon as it was applied to great decoration. The brilliant panels purchased a few years ago by Mr. Pierpont Morgan show the exhaustion of the age. Its painting had become too slight.

Delacroix sought to translate, not this, but its original essence, Rubens, into poetry, and to dissolve it in the French tradition. Even in such early work as the frieze in the throne-room of the Palais Bourbon, the colossal nude figures of which were still wholly Rubensesque, he strives for more strenuous expression. With the Fleming it was the flesh that was eloquent, with Delacroix the gesture. Even in his most mature pictures, Rubens has not the lofty poetry of the naked bodies that cling to Dante's boat in Delacroix' earliest work. I mean the three classic bodies in the centre, which form the artistic base for the figures in the ship. They are worthy of the poet himself. A generation later, Rodin, France's greatest sculptor, built upon a like foundation.

But Rubens is in the *Dante's Boat* too: in the loathsome creature on the left, who holds on to the vessel with his teeth, and the group in the foreground. They recall details in the *Last Judgment* at Munich, and similar things. In spite of all the deductions of modern colourists, the *Dante's Boat* is the strongest of the master's works, notwithstanding the "brown sauce" in which it swims, and the superficial lack of independence. Later, Delacroix gained in beauty, richness, and perfection, but he rarely again gave utterance at once so powerful and so spontaneous to the mighty undertone of his individuality. He slipped his rough husk, rubbed off his asperities by contact with the world, and losing those peculiarities that at first repel in his works, he also lost something of the vehemence that made him great. This must always happen with men like Delacroix, in whom temperament is everything. Poussin and Rembrandt did not reach their full perfection till their old age: Poussin, because he had need of the utmost formal calm, Rembrandt, because the highest spiritual experience was necessary to him. Delacroix is inspiration. His art is the closest possible approximation to the creative force of the poet, for whom all the ripe experience of life cannot replace the "first fine careless rapture." But, if his later works are less forceful than those of his youth, they are perhaps even more important, as expressions of his individuality and revelations of his conception of form.

The *Massacre of Scio* is not quite on a level with the *Dante's Boat* in this respect. It is not so unique, so homogeneous; yet here, too, is a mighty work, so vigorous that its dependence on a tradition is barely noticeable.

To Gros much is forgiven, because he fostered Delacroix and Géricault for a time. We toil patiently through his dreary battles in the great gallery at Versailles, searching for an atom of the genius of his two successors, the genius that shines forth in Delacroix' *Taillebourg*, in this gallery, in spite of all with which it has to contend. If we compare this gigantic picture with the magnificent sketches for it belonging to M. Gallimard and M. Haro in Paris,* we recognise the great gulf that divides Gros from Delacroix. It is a gem, a battle-piece in which, despite the fury of combat that pervades it, a peaceful element makes itself felt above the tumult, inviting the senses to deeper, subtler emotions than could be suggested by a realistic scene of war. When Renoir saw the Gallimard sketch, he said it was like a bunch of roses—a phrase no less honourable to the picture than to Renoir himself, the grateful disciple who grafted the roses of this art on to his own. This marvellous quality is lost in the large picture. The composition, too, is much finer in the smaller work. It is, indeed, a flower-piece, in which warriors and horsemen are the blossoms, yet it has all the *verve* of Rubens in the same genre. Delacroix had evidently seen the Munich *Battle of the Amazons*, or one of the sketches for it. His architecture is used in the same way, the prancing horse in the centre may have done duty as a model for Géricault as well as for Delacroix, and we may perhaps recognise it again in the horse of Chassériau's *Macbeth*, rearing at the encounter with the three witches. But whereas Rubens' Flemish frenzy exalted vast orgies and exaggerated the elements of disorder, in order to riot in the tangle of vehement bodies, we find in Delacroix a higher culture, that delivered movement from the burden of brute-fury, a nobler passion, that dominates the hurly-burly and introduces order even in violence.

Such passion did not lack themes in the days of Byron and Victor Hugo. Delacroix was one of the most fervid in that age of eager enthusiasm. To his contemporaries he appeared rather as a tribune full of generous ideas, than as the apostle of a new art. The threnody in which Cleuziow appreciated him in 1864 is typical of all the rest.† Greece is more to the fore than colour and line in most of them. These ideas have long been out of date, but Delacroix' emotion is as living now as it seemed in those days to his sympathisers; indeed, it has gained that plastic sincerity, which compels belief, whether we admit the value of the conviction or not. Such are the history-painters who live.

Gros is not of their number, in spite of his unruly strength and his extraordinary capacity, in spite of that heroic gallantry which seems to us such a natural reflection of the great epoch. There was in him a lurking barbarism, which ignored the noblest French instincts.

It was not Gros, but Géricault and Delacroix who legitimised the counter-Revolution. Géricault, a splendid athletic youth of the purest nature, the noblest race, a young giant, to whom no exertion was an effort; the other, passion de-

* M. Haro's sketch, which hung in Delacroix' studio till his death, shows the original design for the Versailles picture. The architect made him cut away part of the bridge, and the master often lamented the consequent injury to his composition.

† "L'Œuvre de Delacroix." By Henri du Cleuziow. It was reprinted in a little volume twenty-years later, by Marpon and Flammarion. Paris, 1885.

GÉRICAULT: THE MAD WOMAN (LA FOLLE)
CHÉRAMY COLLECTION, PARIS

materialised, and kindling only for the beautiful, a master who assimilated all the mastery of others, yet never turned away his eyes from heaven or blenched before the splendour of the revelations vouchsafed him.

Géricault's influence on the whole generation of the early nineteenth century was incalculable; the generosity of their art came from him, the simplicity of a patrician cast of thought. He was perhaps the most gifted of them all, an incomparable portrait-painter, whom Delacroix followed without ever overtaking. There is a series of portraits of mysterious types by Géricault—two of these, the famous *La Folle* and *Le Fou*, are in the Cheramy collection—the tremendous force of expression in which seems almost to bridge over the gulf between our age and Rembrandt. His equestrian portraits in the Louvre take away our breath; his landscapes are like heroic deeds.

Everything Géricault touched became immense. The same man who multiplied Gros a hundredfold with a few strokes of the brush, painted the *Radeau de la Méduse*, which clangs through its gallery in the Louvre like a trumpet-blast. It is a shriek of wildest passion, though its echo has tones full of exquisite, peaceful harmonies.*

This raft was the cradle of the painter of *Dante's Boat*, and those who think the obvious relation of this work to Géricault's detracts from Delacroix' greatness forget that nothing less than this mighty precursor was necessary to make Delacroix possible. Even if we infer from Fromentin's memoranda† that Géricault collaborated in the *Dante's Boat*, we have only the greater reason to extol the goodness of Providence, which so brilliantly atoned for Géricault's cruel fate in the person of Delacroix. With such vast possessions, the personal ceases to exist. Delacroix's note, in which he records how he ran through the streets like a madman after seeing the *Raft of the Medusa* would be of little interest, if the consequences of this revelation had not been expressed in a lasting fashion.

Delacroix had a clearer perception of Rubens than had Géricault; it gave his modelling fusion and animation, and endowed even his historical pictures in the spirit of Gros (such as the *Greece Expiring on the Ruins of Missolonghi* in the Bordeaux Museum, the forerunner of the *28 July* in the Louvre) with a flexibility that Géricault lacked and that was essential for after-development.

In the *Massacre of Scio* Delacroix indicates almost the whole sum of what he had to say in composition.

In the splendid group with the horse dragging the half-naked girl, there is the germ of the great Hun picture in the Library of the Palais Bourbon; the dead mother with the babe at her breast in the foreground to the right, is the future Medea, and the whole has the effect of a gloomy pendant to the gorgeous *Entry into Constantinople*. As yet these are laboriously combined fragments, that lie side by side like rough blocks of stone. If we compare the *Massacre* with the *Wreck of the Don Juan* or the *Lake of Gennesareth*, we shall see how far more closely all the details are welded into a whole later on. In these he achieves that famous unity which, as he beautifully said, can only be got by sacrifice. The ship in the *Don Juan* is of the same material as the sea; there are no details now. The passion of the conception is dissolved and permeates the whole. In the *Sea of Gennesareth* the figures, the ship with its sails, and the waves make up a

* In the sketch belonging to M. Moreau-Nélaton the harmony of the forms is more perfect, and all that disturbs the rhythm in the Louvre picture is avoided.

† "Eugène Fromentin." By L. Gonse.

perfect, many-toned melody, in which no one instrument overpowers the others, and only the rhythm prevails. He did not need movement. He took it for convenience' sake. His wonderful *Women of Algeria* is entirely without action, and it is perhaps his greatest achievement.

Delacroix' Eastern subjects gave colour to modern painting. His journey to Africa was a voyage by way of Venice. All great men have a propensity to look behind their prototypes. He saw behind Veronese and Titian, and the works of his friend Bonington and of the much-admired Turner, who also knew Italian colour through a French medium (Claude Lorrain), taught him that he himself needed a more intense nature, rather than the originals in Venice. He would never have found what he brought back from Africa in Venice. In the *Algerian Women* he cleaned his palette, and finally renounced Gros' brown sauce. Colour glows splendidly beside colour, and new contrasts produce new tones. When he painted the *Entry into Constantinople* a gleam of sunshine fell upon the art of France, and Europe hastened to warm herself and recover from the frost of Classicism. Here and in the *Heliodorus* of St. Sulpice, and even earlier in the splendid ceiling in the Louvre, he did not, like his great forerunners, modify the Venetians; he surpassed them in strength of colour. This ceiling in the Galerie d'Apollon glistens like fine mosaic, and triumphantly asserts itself in the profusion of gilding.

He gave modern painting not only colour but a garment of her own. Prud'hon's genius had run about naked, so to speak. Delacroix taught us the dramatic quality of colour, which can convey the deepest mysticism, and represents something altogether different from that which the modern school-colourist sees in it. Van Gogh understood him. In a letter to Emile Bernard he writes: "Ah! le beau tableau d'Eugène Delacroix, la barque du Christ sur la mer de Genesareth.* Lui, avec son auréole d'un pale citron—dormant, lumineux, dans la tache de violet dramatique, de bleu sombre, de rouge sang, du groupe des disciples ahuris, sur la terrible mer d'émeraude montant, montant jusque tout en haut du cadre . . ."

The admirable Thomy Thiéry collection has given the Louvre brilliant examples of the master in every phase, even his latest and ripest period, which would otherwise have been unrepresented in the national museum. It is astonishing to see how youthful the man in Delacroix remained as the artist matured. It needed the unquenched ardour of youth to paint the *Rebecca and the Templar*, which he produced in 1858, when he was past sixty. The Pentecostal tongues of fire seem to glow in the painting.

After his Eastern travels, in other words during his greatest period, Delacroix changed very little. In his subjects especially he was always conservative. In Moreau's and Robaut's catalogues of his gigantic work, we note how he treated the same subjects at different periods. He did so, no doubt, from a kind of respect for the idea that had given him such grandiose results as the *Medea;* it acted as an auto-suggestion firing his imagination and enabling him to go still further. He called this "se faire la main." The owner of the fragment of the *Massacre* told me that Delacroix painted it in 1838, to get his hand in for the *Taking of Constantinople*. He thus gave an objective, as it were, to his dæmon; he could not control it, but was able so to prepare himself that he might be ready when the inspiration came. Thus he accustomed himself to paint his

* He was referring to one of the many sketches of the composition, one of the finest of which belongs to M. Gallimard.

DELACROIX: HORSE AND TIGER (LITHOGRAPH)

CHÉRAMY AND A. ROUART COLLECTIONS, PARIS

most brilliant conceptions, such as this fragment from the *Massacre of Scio*, with the same vigour, though not in the same manner as in the original picture in glowing colour instead of Gros' sauce; he made still-life pieces out of his inspirations.

Sometimes ideas occurred to him a tempo. The splendid large sketch, *King Rodrigo losing his Crown*, formerly belonging to Dumas the Elder and now to Cheramy, was painted in three hours. Dumas had requested his artist-friends, Delacroix among the number, to decorate a room in his new villa (it was in 1830), with panels. The pictures were to be ready on a certain day, when Dumas was to give a ball. When the day arrived, only the panel assigned to Delacroix remained empty. At noon the painter came to the house, and was aghast at the large surface reserved for him; he had meant to paint only a few flowers, "Listen," said Dumas, "I have just been reading something that will do for you," and he described the first canto of the "Romancero," in which Rodrigo loses his crown. Delacroix began at once, and had painted the whole scene by sunset, in the most unusual colours, a harmony in yellow, unique in his work. Great was the enthusiasm in the evening, when the friends saw the picture; Barye, in particular, who had contributed an excellent panel, is said to have been beside himself.*

It is difficult to do justice to his most important work, the ceiling-pictures and the two hemicycles in the Library of the Palais Bourbon. A young Frenchman, Jules Rais, called it the French Sistine Chapel,† and it certainly recalls the other in the wretched misapplication of its treasures. Sometimes in the morning, when the sun lights up the long room cheerfully, we get some idea of the wealth of action that is wasted here. The two hemicycles are antithetical; one is the purest lyric poetry, the peaceful Orpheus among the Greeks, the other the most frantic drama, the horrors of war, Attila devastating Italy. A whole world of pictures surges between the two. Many of these recall Poussin, especially the peaceful scene, where the oxen pass quietly along, surrounded by joyous naked figures. It is the mature Poussin again, to whom the beautiful, though unhappily almost invisible cupola in the Library of the Luxembourg owes something of its peculiarly sweet and solemn character Delacroix' composition is not so rhythmic as the poetry of the beautiful *Bacchanalia*, but on the other hand, it is more fiery and virile. The *Education of Achilles* is marked by the most admirable symmetry in its vigour. Others among these marvellous pentagonal pendentives suggest that earlier Poussin who, before he left France, painted the fine ceiling for Richelieu.‡ The *Attila* is perhaps Delacroix' most brilliant achievement of the period. To a deputy who objected that *he* had never seen such a horse, Thiers, who had given Delacroix the commission, retorted: "Vous voulez donc avoir vu le cheval d'Attila?" No criticism could have been more apposite. There is a wild, almost dæmoniac creative energy in the composition, that far outstrips the school of Poussin; yet the reverence due to Poussin is not outraged thereby.

It is lamentable that these paintings should not be removed and replaced by copies, as Geffroy§ lately proposed, that the originals might be preserved.

* See Dumas' "Mémoires," 1898, vol. ix. p. 110.

† "Le Palais et la Chambre des Députés," in the "Revue Universelle" of October 15, 1902.

‡ Now No. 735 in the Louvre (Salle du Poussin).

§ "Les Peintures d'Eugène Delacroix à la Bibliothèque de la Chambre des Députés," 1903. With reproductions. Delacroix was obliged to repaint a large part of his work, owing to the defective state of the surface. The *Peace* is now disfigured by a large crack. This and the pendant in the other dome are painted on the wall; the ceiling pictures are on canvas. They might easily be saved.

Like so many other things in France they are threatened with ruin. Happily, a single work is but as a drop in the ocean to the life-work of an artist so prolific that Rubens alone can be compared with him. And his fame is already secure in the tradition of his native land.

The devotion young France accords to Delacroix imposes silence as to his weaknesses. These were so obvious, and so easily overcome by the contemporary generation, that it never occurs to any one in France to discuss them. The German, on the other hand, who prides himself on nothing so much as on his victory over Romanticism, is generally so much repelled by them that he fails to enjoy the rest. We may admit that the fluttering ends of drapery in many of his works are often disagreeable, even in his Louvre ceiling ; in the Chapel of St. Sulpice the Raphaelesque action is no truer than in the prototype. It is in this chapel that the younger generation has made a practice of paying homage to the master; it is one of the few places where light and position do not make it impossible to see the picture. Long after leaving it, one seems to be still in the whirlpool of colour, and this feeling is more enduring than the discomfort produced by certain rhetorical details of the composition, which finally resolve themselves into mere superficialities. Who will dwell on these trifles so far as to forget the consummate general structure, and the culminating audacity of the ceiling. Delacroix, like every true Frenchman, is an orator, as was the simple Millet, as is every young aspirant, even the greatest blagueur of the crew. The Latin races talk with the hands, but what they say may be very remarkable nevertheless. The unnatural in Delacroix' unsuccessful attitudes is a natural extreme, which nevertheless recalls the marvellous norm in which he is so great. Even his defects seem inevitable. He composed to some extent in sections, in long-drawn gasps, as a worker accomplishes a heavy labour. This is evident in all his great decorations. There are, of course, a thousand links binding these components together, but he does not always succeed in fusing them. The fluttering streamers and protruding legs that disfigure some of his pictures were the result, not of exuberant rhetoric, but of the weariness of the toiler, who forgets to remove his ladder after finishing his building. He had an unsatisfied longing for a style to which every particle of the whole should contribute, an ambition that was not to be realised, because his genius lacked that grain of prudence which was also denied to Michelangelo. He was as gifted as an artist can be in our age, and he had perhaps the tragic perception that the implied restriction is very considerable.

He had Michelangelo's mysterious power of suggesting a drama by an arm or a leg, a piece of flesh. Into everything he touched, he sent a mighty current of life. To evolve harmonies from the titanic elements with which he worked was a stupendous task. He brought to bear upon it a system of colour of like intensity. Delacroix' colour does not lie on the canvas; it emanates from the surface, and as it leaves this, seems to begin a new life of its own. Rubens and the Venetians are outstripped. To others, he is as a ruby to an expanse of painted glass. And all that can be urged against Delacroix is based on the postulate, that it is impossible to make walls with rubies.

Superabundance, super-humanity. Nietzsche compared him to Wagner, but the comparison is just neither to Delacroix nor to Wagner. Wagner was centrifugal, the great and beautiful expanse; Delacroix is a sum of gigantic forces, focussed to a minute point.

The smaller Delacroix are, of course, the most finely organised colour harmonies. Here he comes in contact with Constable. The relation between the two is as that between Velazquez and Rubens, or in our own times, between Manet and Renoir : the elective affinity of two utterly different temperaments. These two great men may be studied side by side in the gallery that contains the finest collection of Delacroix after the Louvre—M. Cheramy's huge studio in Paris, a storehouse of pearls, where hundreds of treasures are garnered, apparently without method, and even in bewildering disorder, but in reality bearing a definite relation to one another—children of one family scattered throughout a world.* Kneeling before a Delacroix in this dissecting-room for the student of occult developments, one must be careful not to overturn an easel with a dozen tiny Constables. Each has his family about him, Constable his English progenitors, Delacroix his French relations. Genealogies are momentous things in art as elsewhere. It is more important to trace them here than in the annals of mere mortals, for through them the closest secrets of the origin of styles reveal themselves. For this reason the hours spent in this mad medley are among the most stimulating one can imagine. One does not learn a science here, but simply a means of living a hundred years longer than other men, because one enjoys a hundredfold more. The power of recognising a multitude in the concatenation presented by a genius, enables us to enjoy not only the one but all the others, to grasp our cosmos in its highest form and to discover in one law a hundred others.

In the Cheramy gallery, we recognise the superficiality of the phrase that has been repeated in every art-history since Fromentin, as to Constable's influence upon Delacroix. It is prejudicial not to Delacroix, but to those who desire to approach him more closely, for it measures greatness by an utterly primitive standard. This standard is the question of costume. Let us imagine an Italian and a German of the purest blood in the drawing-room of an English lady, or the boudoir of a French grande dame. They wear the same costume, because they belong to circles which have discarded a national dress, and they speak the same language, which is not necessarily their own, because it is a mark of good breeding to be master of a tongue in which one can make oneself understood anywhere. As the result of a thousand circumstances, they are all capable of behaving in a European fashion, in other words, of accepting a convention the comprehension of which implies gentle birth, and they pride themselves on making their temperament and their peculiarities subject to this form.

The convention in our present case is stronger than that of the lady's salon ; it represents the contemporary form of pictorial expression. In those high circles in which Constable, Géricault, and Delacroix move, people express themselves as they do. But we cannot deduce what is characteristic of each, from what is common to all three. It is a matter of common knowledge that Delacroix re-painted his *Massacre of Scio* after seeing the *Hay Wain* in the Salon. Géricault's letters, and Delacroix' own comments on his London impressions, sufficiently show how far he was indebted to the Englishman. I shall deal with this more fully in its place. Here, I am rather concerned to insist on Delacroix' independence, for even in these days there are some who, taking up the tale of Couture's pamphlet,† see

* It is characteristic of this accomplished connoisseur, that he should have bequeathed his finest fragment of the *Massacre* to the London National Gallery, on condition that it shall hang beside the best Constable.

† " Méthode et Entretiens d'Atelier," par Thomas Couture, Paris, 1868.

in the master an irresponsible eclectic. What Delacroix found in Constable was less a new formula of colour than a method of freeing himself from the entanglement of ill-defined images, of getting away from Gros, and giving clarity and precision to his own style. Constable taught him a higher conception of colour, but what would this have availed him, if he had not been capable of using it for the development of his own personality? Nothing could be more unlike Constable's landscapes than the little gems of the Thomy Thiéry collection. The relative similarity of the two men lies in this, that they chose from their rich heritage the elements that enabled them to adopt a higher convention, each after his own manner. This could only be a convention of colour, for both were too clear-sighted, too original, and too honest not to admit that colour must be the first concern of the painter. Constable may seem the greater discoverer of the two, because his native art offered him fewer elements which could be utilised, than that of Delacroix, who was familiar with the great pictorial art of all the ages. But Constable was the poorer of the two, not because he painted landscapes while the other ranged over a wider field of subjects, but because there is a richer world of enchantment in Delacroix, because he used the Englishman's gift for the revelation of personal qualities of which there is no hint in the *Hay Wain*. His relation to Constable is of the same order as his relation to Géricault. He fought his battle with troops his predecessor had trained. That he conquered is the essential fact.

Finally, in all appreciations of Delacroix' colour, now the central point of interest, we must be careful not to value him only for his palette. We can make carpets with colour, but not pictures. There are people who forgive Delacroix all the rest for the sake of his colour. But the rest is everything, just as with Rembrandt.

GOYA: VISION DE LA ROMERIA DE SAN ISIDRO

PRADO, MADRID

DAUMIER: DRINKING SONG (WATER-COLOUR)

TAVERNIER COLLECTION, PARIS

HONORÉ DAUMIER

In Rembrandt's shadow we meet Delacroix' great comrade, who also demonstrated how great or how little the importance of colour may be. He forces us to a deep conception of art, if we would appreciate him and yet not depreciate the other in the process.

Delacroix fought with new methods for the heroic tradition of France. Daumier made a virtue of necessity, and renounced the attempt to draw epic poetry from the age. He may have believed in heroism none the less.

We should learn to pronounce Delacroix and Daumier in one breath. The one was the conscience of the other, and in every artistic mortal the two elements they represent must be combined to give perfect fruition. Our whole age lurks in three strokes of Daumier's brush. He abandoned himself to his painting just as Delacroix stood on his guard against his. The culture of the creator of the *Dante's Boat* was immeasurably above the author of the *Ventre Législatif*, but it is like the boat itself, that struggles against the forces surrounding it, and never reaches the shore. Daumier had the new barbaric healthiness : a huge nerve, formed to divine all that is monstrous and vibratory in our age—and to laugh at it ! His pictures are spasms of genius, of our genius, of that paradoxical genius of the nineteenth century which we might describe by transposing what Ingres said of Signorelli, " C'est beau, c'est trés beau, mais c'est laid ! "—" It is ugly, very ugly, but extraordinarily beautiful ! "

Daumier's caricature was an expedient. It replaced the motley of those earlier court fools, under cover of which wise men said profound but forbidden things. The age was not of a temper to accept as serious an art such as this bourgeois who hated the bourgeoisie offered it, nor would he have trusted himself to give such serious expression to it, had he not believed that he was only jesting. He used the tradition Delacroix had reverenced only to laugh at it, and found a stimulus in the exaggeration of his freedom from its restraints. Everything that Michelangelo and Rubens had set apart for the creation of the lofty and grandiose, he compressed into a tiny surface, in which every particle became vociferous speech, a neighing of the human herd, that no longer sounds comical. If the sign-manual of true humour be the gravity that lurks in the back ground, Daumier must be accounted an excellent jester. I do not know if his famous drawing of the *Malade Imaginaire* was ever accepted as humorous : the living corpse upon the chair, the sweat of terror on his brow, and the doctor with the death's head beside him, staring into the corner paralysed with horror. But the supposition would be natural enough. The doctor in particular is intended to be comic ; the absurdity of his costume only serves to intensify the grim earnestness of the subject. This is the wit of Pierrot as conceived by our age ; fundamentally, it is no less ghastly than the most frenzied inventions of Daumier's forerunner, Goya. The cynical monuments he erected in the law-courts of the Citizen Kingdom are not any more laughable. What fascinated him in the lawyers was not only their rascality, but the animality of their speech. He loved the mouth as Géricault loved the horse. The famous water-colour, *La Chanson à boire*,* is a physiology

* Tavernier Collection, Paris ; reproduced here.

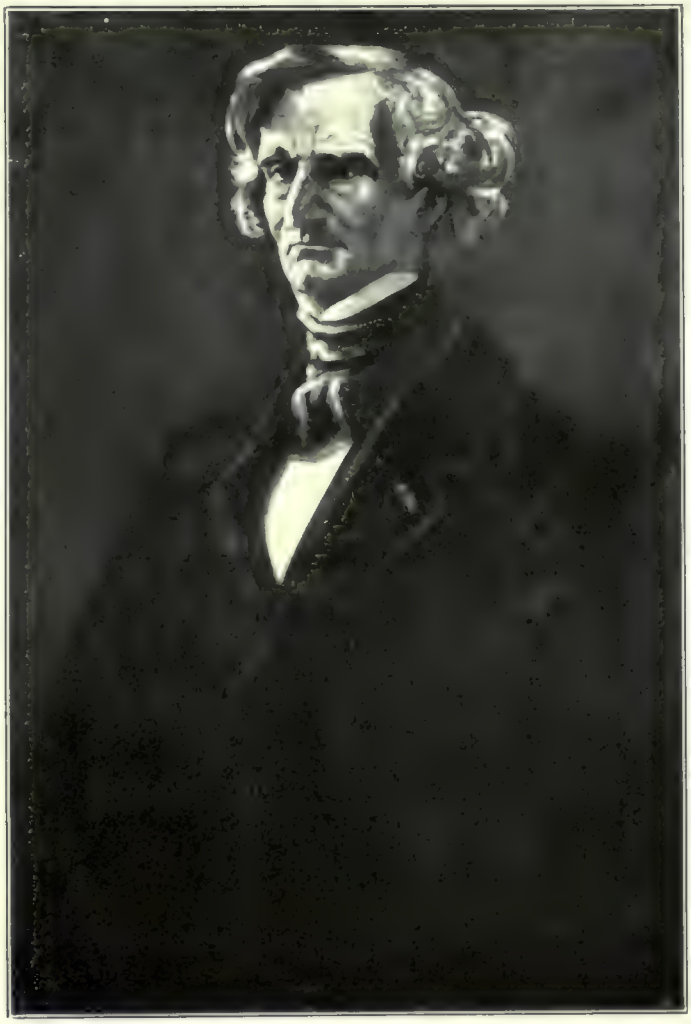
of the human mouth. The two advocates in the *Cause Célèbre* are two beasts, bellowing at each other ; our hands go up to our ears instinctively ; they seem to have hideous limbs under their gowns with which they claw their flesh, which is not as other men's flesh. The spectators sit like a whole world, dumbly attentive to the combat between the grotesque monsters. A very different Shakespeare this, to the one Delacroix understood ! The inhuman is embodied here ; it towers aloft like the upheaval of some great city in convulsion, to a sky ceiled with the planks of coffins.

What harmless folks are those modern satirists who so easily incur the penalties of the law, in comparison with Daumier ! It seems amazing that this man should not have been torn limb from limb ; when he wished to say the most harmless thing, he could not refrain from spitting in the face of the world at large. Most satirists are sentimental folks ; this one employed the "anatomical expression" which the peaceful Raphael Mengs thought reprehensible in Michelangelo ; the vulgarity of his personages is not in their faces but in their bones ; their very marrow snarls and gibbers. All the optimism which a divine illumination lent to the chisel of the ancients seems here to have become a negation no less irresistible, and derived from the very same sources. For Daumier was a classicist ; this is what differentiates him most sharply from Goya, whom Mengs was never able to lead into the right road ; something of the marble grandeur of the ancients lurks in his every gesture. He has vast contours, vast surfaces, nothing superfluous weakens the force of expression. It is notorious that he built up his victims first in tone ; drawing came afterwards. It still bears the mighty thumb-mark of its sculptor. No painter before or after him has ever understood how to weld with the brush as he did. Bonington was the one artist of our epoch who foreshadowed it, when he painted the picture of his housekeeper now in the Louvre. It seems as if the price paid by such precursors must always be life. An aureole like that which surrounds Géricault hovers about this Englishman, who died at the age of twenty-seven. From this portrait of an elderly woman to Daumier's Berlioz at Versailles there is but a step, though it is a good stride, certainly, from the shrewd, somewhat perverse old dame with a weakness for the brandy bottle * to the masterful male of the same family. The Berlioz might have been painted yesterday, if a man of such originality could have been found yesterday.† Manet is here, Cézanne, and the greatest of the Germans. Poor Van Gogh lost his reason half a century later in his efforts to paint in this manner. The portrait hangs in the second (Attique) storey of the palace, near David's fine equestrian *Bonaparte* and other respectable achievements, but one sees nothing else. All the rest seems asleep, while this one work speaks to us of our inner life in lightning phrases. Everything in it is novel. The black velvet of the coat gleams against the dark brown background like the sleek fur of a cat. The rosette of the Légion d'Honneur strikes a vehement red note in the harmony. The splendid tone of the high neckcloth is got by a few touches of blue. We can count the brush strokes that build up the flamboyant face in a few seconds, and yet the work is more complete than anything the centuries have painted in this much decorated palace, besides being one of the master's few finished works.

For in this again Daumier belongs to the men of to-day, unhappily; he has

* Delacroix also painted her with this same air of bibulous joviality.

† This modern note has given rise to doubts (perfectly groundless) as to the authenticity of the work.



DAUMIER: PORTRAIT OF BERLIOZ

VERSAILLES MUSEUM

left hardly anything but sketches, splashes of colour that resolve themselves into faces, the notes of a temperament that already had another design in view when the hand was setting down the first. Yet these notes are like the leading words in a sentence that give the sense unerringly. With Daumier the sketch is so pregnant that the conception of finality ceases to play an important part. Ingres summed up all linear conception in a line; his Grecianism enabled him to simplify Raphael and Guido. Daumier takes the strongest plastic expression, and veils it in a remarkable substance that has the property of suggesting the essentials of all it contains. A juggler with shadows, like Rembrandt, with whom alone he may be aptly compared, a painter so mighty, that no terms can exaggerate the greatness of his importance. Caricatures were his life studies. He needed no convention to do all the rest with these. Like Rembrandt he dips his figures, which he saw in barbaric sharpness of contour, into an atmosphere of humanity, where mockery falls away, and we note only the deep breathing of a great soul. Such pictures are rare. The fact that he was condemned to work at lithography for his daily bread has been justly regretted; but one is apt to forget, that this preliminary work was the bread of his art too, a necessary compensation of the brain, just as were Leonardo's caricatures to the creator of the *Gioconda*. And if the complete results are scanty, it may be argued that perfection is in its nature rare. I am not sure that Daumier would have painted many more finished works like the Seine Quay series under other conditions. He never finished the beautiful *Laveuse* in the Bureau collection, though he painted it more than once. Of the several versions of this motive, the most elaborate is the Gallimard example, where the neglected background of the Bureau version is exquisitely brought out in the form of houses. Apart from this, I prefer the fine material of the Bureau picture and the pale golden yellow tone; Daumier, too, was often in love with various aspects of one design, and therefore hesitated to conclude them all at once. He has scarcely said all he had to say in any one picture, but I doubt if greater leisure would have enabled him to do so.

The difference between the caricatures and these pictures is almost incomprehensible at times. In his caricatures he makes his figures up of holes; in his pictures they are treated with a great prodigality of masses, as in the *Bain*, formerly in the Lutz collection, or the *Lutteurs* of the Sarlin collection, one of the picture that reveal the future for a century, and at the same time recall the past. Michelangelo might have painted such things, if he had lived in our times.

I have a vague recollection of the famous *Wagon de Troisième Classe* which Durand-Ruel sold to Mr. Borden, of New York, many years ago. M. Gallimard owns a brilliant replica with variations. The figures sit there as if cast in a mould, clumsy creatures such as Leibl showed us later, but simpler, more vigourous, and marked by an intense reality that the Gallic race has never achieved before or since. We see scarcely a colour, to say nothing of a detail; it is not beautiful, nor is it a cunning transcript of nature. We stand before it helpless, as before the two giants of the Quirinal, nay, more helpless, for here the tremendous power of the work is even more unaccountable. Thus was the famous Realism born, of which the nineteenth century is so proud, and it is well to remember that it never became greater than its father had made it. Millet expounded it, Courbet and Leibl organised it, and many others have elaborated it; no one has surpassed its original greatness.

Daumier's mysterious power becomes more intelligible when we see his

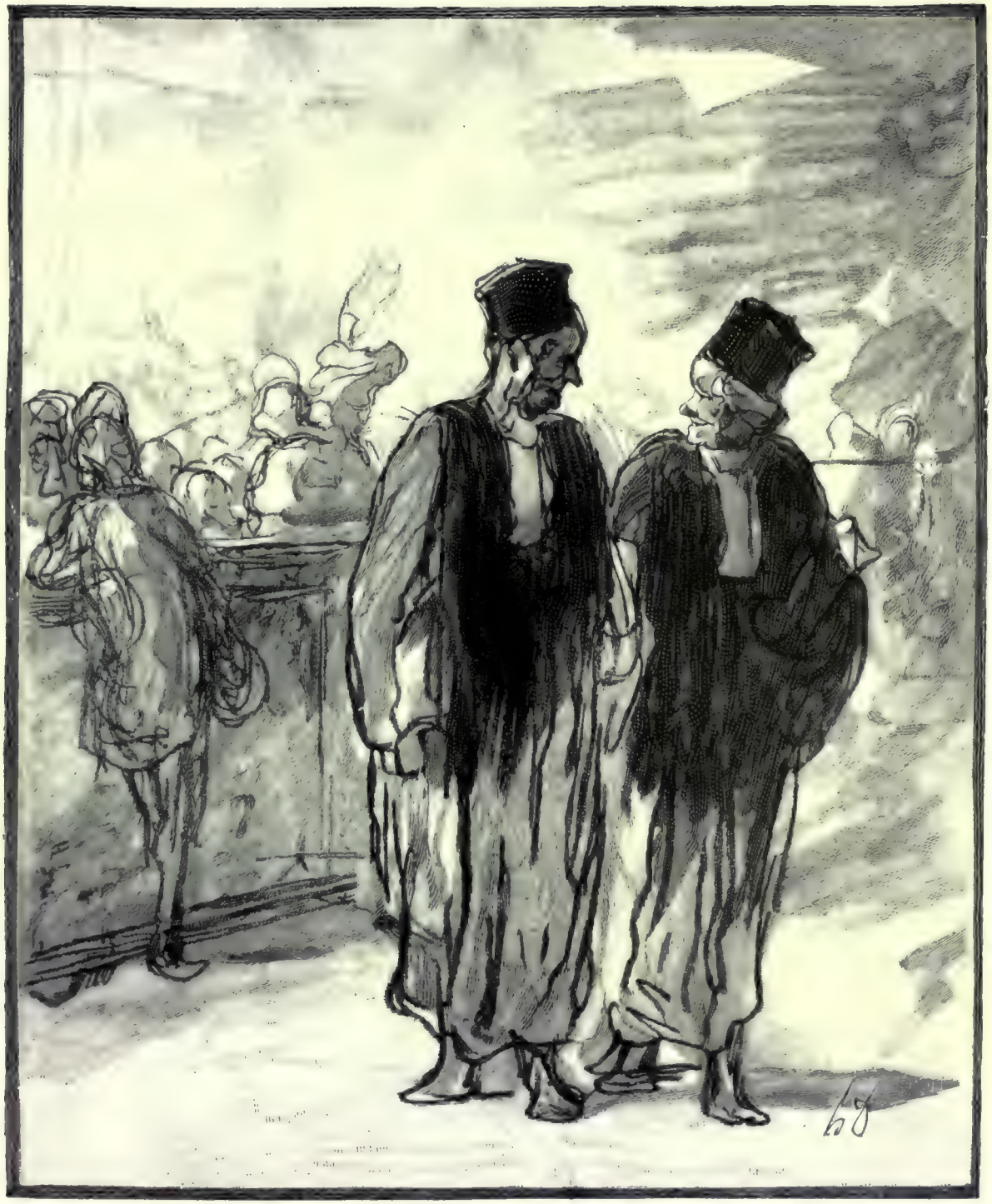
sculpture. He did very little; his best known work is the caricature of Napoleon III., *Ratapoil*, the wild figure, made up of hollows, which against all probability is instinct with the most amazing vitality.* The finest is Roger Marx' relief, reproduced here, the wonderful train of fugitives he painted so often,† in which he reveals his affinity with Michelangelo more distinctly than anywhere else.

Daumier was the first logical Impressionist, and none dared more greatly than he without renouncing more. His aim was to multiply the elements that served the movement at the expense of the rest. His is a kind of ghostly art. In his numerous renderings of Don Quixote, he has made symbols of the two figures, that give an almost metaphysical value to the conceptions of "fat" and "thin." M. Bureau owns a sketch in which Sancho Pansa thrones it upon his ass like some idol, and Don Quixote's figure shoots forward like an arrow, almost horizontally. The whole essence of Cervantes' romance seems to lurk in this opposition of thick to thin lines, and our delight in the parody deepens to a recognition of mysterious natural laws. Or again, he gets the most extraordinary effects of space by a few streaks of wash. M. Gallimard has a little drawing of this kind, a group of four figures. Of the ten or a hundred thousand planes or lines that would make up such a picture in nature, he takes the three or four that are essential, and these he fashions so that they produce the harmony Nature achieves with her thousand notes. Rodin adopted this method later for his grandest designs, simplifying still farther and insisting more upon rhythm. He has every reason to be grateful to Daumier.

There are people who question the value of this simplification, and conclude from such examples as these that they are only useful to artists themselves as exercises, and are of no account to the layman, because they do not seem necessary to the finished work. He who is not content with Daumier's sketches, may well question the raison d'être of all art. They are not valuable only because they have made all the art of the moderns, but because they are perfect in themselves, because they reveal things that were only dimly divined before Daumier, things that appear to us as essential as the progress of our present social conditions, as compared with those of earlier times. A new art-language arose from Daumier's sketchiness, at the syntax of which we are still working. No historical considerations are necessary to compel admiration for its power. Daumier himself created true epics therewith. We may call his *Don Quixote* in the Berlin Gallery sketchy, if we choose to compare it with a Meissonier. But we may as justly call it fresco-like, if we compare it from a greater distance. It is not, in truth, the picture, but the eye of the spectator which is sketchy. Nothing could be less pertinently laid to the charge of such pictures than the reproach of obscurity and indistinctness implied in the term sketchy. The master of shadow, who often avoided all precise form, painted when he chose with outlines thick as the finger surrounding enamelled planes, and delighted in a decoration that would well have borne expansion into fresco. In his masterpiece, the *Drama*, one of the treasures of the Berlin gallery, this powerful contour is combined with the most exquisitely liquid colour. Daumier could be

* Arsène Alexandre had twenty reproductions cast in bronze from his example; they are in various collections.

† One example in the Alexis Rouart collection, Paris. Roger Marx' relief, here reproduced, is the only example in bronze, and was made by the galvano-plastic process from the original plaster model.



DAUMIER: THE TWO LAWYERS (LES DEUX AVOCATS) (WATER-COLOUR)
BUREAU COLLECTION, PARIS
WOODCUT BY MARX (L'IMAGE)
CORP. FR. DES GRAVEURS SUR BOIS

a great colourist upon occasion. He substituted a fluid strawberry red for his usual brown, painted blue atmosphere like Velazquez, pale golden backgrounds like the most refined of the Dutchmen, and invented contrasts of pink and orange which recall the Venetians. The picture of Christ and the Disciples in the Amsterdam Ryksmuseum, is one of the best examples for this aspect of the master. This versatility told against his fame as a painter, for it was combined with an indifference to motive, which the stupidity of the public translated into poverty of invention. The best artists of his day thought differently. Corot's high estimate of him is well known. Delacroix copied many of his drawings. Many of the younger men came still nearer to him.

Till quite lately this influence was practically non-existent for the public. Collectors like Bureau, in whose family the worship of Daumier is a tradition, and Rouart, perhaps the oldest living collector of Daumier's works, are rare. The Centennial Exhibition of 1900, and the supplementary exhibition in the École des Beaux Arts revealed Daumier the painter to France.

It is to be hoped that the time will come when a monument will be raised to him. On the base, where the contemplative symbols generally find a place, I would put four artists: Millet, Cézanne, Meunier, and Van Gogh; all in the reverent attitude of worship.

* * * * * * *

Delacroix and Daumier make up a remarkable synthesis. Their work, taken in conjunction, embraces the art that had been before them, and the future to the present day. Daumier's individual manner points backwards, not because we find Michelangelo in him, but because his creative manner brings back the most precious elements of the earlier masters. His genius was the mastery over space, the justness of his modelling in every dimension, the power of placing the object in the picture as firmly in all its ramifications as a form in the air, the art, which the Germanic mind, eager for reality, has always understood better than has the Latin intellect, the art which enabled Rembrandt to offer a triumphant resistance to the seductions of its rival.

This art, which actually succeeded in giving everything in a picture, which fixed the divine trinity, architecture, painting, and sculpture on a canvas, and confined it within the four barriers of a frame, was bound to fall, as soon as the instinct of the age considered its tendency, and divined the dark side of this concentration. In Daumier's hasty and deliberately fragmentary manner we divine something like a doubt as to the basis of his creation, and we hear the mocking laughter of the Decadent, who is content to bathe one tiny detail in Rembrandt's mellow haze, and to leave another, a bare skeleton, rising stark and grisly into the air.

Delacroix stands already on the other side. We shall look in vain to him for the masterly assurance with which Daumier built up his figures, even when he left them naked. He desired to decorate surfaces, not space; but the implied renunciation gave him all that Daumier lacked. The gloom that fills space with mystery, is inferior to the light that floods a surface. But what the greatest masters of planes possessed, is revived, and the consciousness of a great intellect, making use of a happy gift, was able to bring it to a point of splendour never before achieved. The form that grasps such facts still trembles from the violence of its own gesture; the goblet that gleams before the future seems to overflow.

There is no lack of thirsty souls to drink of it.

CAMILLE COROT

His mother, whom he always called "La belle Dame," was a fashionable milliner of Swiss origin, under the first and second Empires. His father, the son of a wig-maker, was the cashier of the establishment.

The mother loved the boy tenderly. The father, a typical, commonplace bourgeois, watched his career with amazement; he was still full of naïve astonishment when a purchaser came to his fifty-year-old son for a picture, and when the Legion of Honour was bestowed, found it difficult to believe that the distinction was not intended for himself, but for the painter. No undue difficulties were made, when the youth chose the strange career of an artist. The old man placed to his son's credit the sum of money he had set aside to establish him in business, and gave him a sufficient allowance. The parents were not afraid he would commit follies. Camille was a good lad.

Was it possible that a revolutionary artist should spring from such surroundings, where comfort and well-being reigned, and only the most delicate things were dealt with, where every gesture contained some tasteful feminine essence? Everything seemed to negative such a possibility. Physically, however, he was extraordinarily robust and powerful, like Courbet. The sexagenarian who rose with the sun, who defied cold and wet, who dressed like a peasant, and went about like a labourer, might have been the son of a peasant. It was only in his face that all the gentleness of his nature manifested itself. It was like that of a country priest of the best kind, whose piety seems to come to him from Nature.

In short, he seemed to be anything rather than a revolutionary. He was born before the death of the eighteenth century, and was about a year older than Delacroix, but nothing of the wild period had touched him. A virginal soul dwelt in the sturdy body. His letters to his parents and friends read like the outpourings of a schoolgirl. He was devout, went regularly to mass, and was not ashamed to talk of "le bon Dieu" before the Bohemians.

No man was ever happier. He was able to gratify his modest aspirations to the full. He had more friends than great princes, and can scarcely be said to have known an enemy. Why should he not have been pious? For his piety was fettered by no narrow formula. It reveals itself in the phrase he once pronounced touching a future life: "Well, at any rate, I hope we shall go on painting up there." As has often been the case in France, it mixed up the beautiful with the divinely ordained, angels with nymphs, Heaven with Olympus. Although a good Christian, he was not a bad Pagan Greek. Théophile Gautier called him a poet, but that is almost too true. This poet was a thorough bourgeois. When a friend of his mature years taught him to fish, Corot forgot his painting for a fortnight in his ardour for this characteristic amusement of the middle-class Parisian. Family gatherings were his passion. He never missed a baptism or wedding; in politics he was a thorough-going Conservative; Courbet impressed him greatly; he was not converted to Delacroix till his old age, and could never bear Manet. He was

DAUMIER: THE FUGITIVES BRONZE RELIEF FROM THE ORIGINAL PLASTER MODEL
ROGER MARX COLLECTION, PARIS

certainly greater as an artist than as a man, or, at least, so it appears to us, because good-nature is a quality we are not inclined to ascribe to the great. And yet "le Père Corot" and his works were as much one as body and soul. We feel somewhat suspicious of such anecdotes as those which tell how Corot presented himself to his friend Dutilleux, the mediocre landscape-painter, proposing that they should paint "veritables chefs-d'œuvre," together, or how he cleaned his flutes "to work for the little birds in the wood." Who can believe such things nowadays? Are there any children left in the world?

He, at any rate was a child; we cannot describe his nature more exactly. When dubious dealers brought him false pictures, he painted new ones for them over the old ones—Roger Milès gives two or three amusing anecdotes in this connection*—and on his death-bed he signed a forgotten picture for Tedesco. He was much more good-natured than the average child, but he had the optimism of childhood. His biography, compiled with great industry by Moreau-Nélaton, reads like the life-story of a child who lived to be eighty.†

He worked playfully, with a fancy characteristic of boyhood. There is a certain childlike element in his art. When I look at his drawings I always feel as if I were contemplating the works of a very young man, whose creations have all the naïveté of the beginner. He was at school in Rouen until he was eighteen, then he was a clerk for eight years, then for a time with his contemporary, the precocious classicist, Michallon, and when this artist, who had shown considerable promise in certain small landscapes, died in 1822, Corot entered the atelier of Victor Bertin, the academician par excellence. But, as a fact, he never studied in any actual school. This was the great difference between him and Ingres, between the new art and the old. Ingres was the highest expression of school, Corot of self-teaching. "Confiance et conscience" was his axiom, two words that were synonymous to him, for "conscience" to him applied only to his own standard, his own sensations, as expressed in Nature. Nothing else seemed of moment to him, he would think of nothing else, not even of the old masters. To be a child, to open one's eyes, to dream—et voilá! Ingres succeeded in assimilating the highest culture so intensely, one might almost say so physically, that his formula seems almost like Nature. Almost, yet not quite. For we can never forget, even before the *Bain Turc*, that we are looking at a painting, a construction, and the most brilliant of the Odalisque drawings always suggest decoration. Corot is purely human, but such is his divine instinct that the loveliest form is also the most natural to him. Herein is his great charm, and also his absolutely unique importance. The artistic parti-pris of the stylists, even of an Ingres, has all manner of beauties, but it conceals the elementary. It works through tradition. The artist does not identify himself with it altogether. The spectator has to overcome the tradition before he can penetrate to the actual form of the artist, to his humanity, and this circuitous way of approach wearies him occasionally. Nothing of this sort impedes us on our road to Corot. We believe his statements at once, for in his method of communication, in every stroke, we trace his creative emotion. It is this which makes Corot a modern. But he is not so in every sense. The first need of an age, stripped of the ancient culture, was a swift capacity for the expression of the human. This he had. But Delacroix and

* "Album classique des Chefs-d'œuvre de Corot." (Braun et Cie., Paris, 1895.)

† "L'Œuvre de Corot par Alfred Robaut, catalogue raisonné et illustré précéde de l'histoire de Corot et de ses œuvres par Étienne Moreau-Nélaton." (H. Floury, Paris, 1905.)

Daumier also worked to this end, and yet we do not reckon them among the moderns. In both of these, the style-element of the old masters persisted, though it had been tremendously modified. In Delacroix Romanticism made it rhetorical, in Daumier it was applied to caricature. They were both Encyclopædists of the revolution of form, playing the part of Diderot, but they were not active revolutionaries.

These were to come in formidable numbers. But Corot was not one of them. He was without the subjectively rebellious strain that characterised Rousseau and Dupré, and in a still greater degree, Courbet and his school. But it was just this that gives him his unique position in his age, and makes the effect of his work so beneficent. The revolutionaries came, and were bound to come. The age called them forth. The programme followed automatically. Courbet's realism—not, of course, his painting—was a phenomenon that might have been reckoned upon almost mathematically. But Corot had no place in the programme. He was a Heaven-sent surprise. It was just the non-revolutionary nature of his genius that was wonder-working. It cut him off from the momentary success and from the enthusiasm that was Courbet's portion, but it saved him from the unjust and abysmal fall, from the monstrous fate of Courbet, who was thrust into a corner like a disused piece of furniture, after having given the watch-word to the world. Courbet was thought to have been disposed of with his programme, and those who thought thus overlooked the fact that he towered immeasurably above it. Corot had no formulated programme beyond his "confiance et conscience." But, indeed, he realised the most positive of all programmes, that of preserving tradition in the new spirit. It was the spirit, and not the form of tradition which lived in him, and all unconsciously inspired him. He determined to paint only what he saw, but in reality he painted at the same time all the impressions of a man who was a Frenchman to his finger-tips, all the optimism of his happy race, all the rich legendary lore of a son of the people. His nymphs spring from the earth like his trees. He must have seen them. They are the organic beings of his Nature, and when they are absent in his works, Nature is so painted that we feel they must appear somewhere. This was so from the beginning, when he was only thinking of learning to see from Nature, and it was this involuntarily softened relation to Nature, which I hope to demonstrate more plainly, that gave him his distinctive position among the Barbizon painters. One of its most salient features was his comparative indifference to locality. Rousseau and Dupré were stationary folks ; Corot flew about the world like a butterfly, now here, now there. His mobility seems difficult to reconcile with his contentment and well-being, and yet they must have been compatible ; no one seems to have felt any surprise at finding him in a new place every fortnight throughout the summer.

He rarely made incursions into Rousseau's domain. His world was not the stately forest at Barbizon ; but rather the gentle beauty of the pond at Ville d'Avray, with its coquettish surroundings, or Nantes, with its bridge and river, or Arras with its long, oft-painted road, where his friends lived : simple, honest admirers, quiet people like himself, among whom he perhaps was more at his ease than among his philosophising colleagues. Or Auvers, in the lovely valley of the Oise, where he gave the house to Daumier ; the landscape glorified by Cézanne and Pissarro, and finally by Van Gogh, a district at least as important in the history of modern art as Barbizon.

But he cannot, indeed, be described as the painter of any special landscape.

His pictures were within him, and he needed external phenomena merely to confirm his visions. He was one of those wonder-children, who are born with a sense of form. It was long taken for granted that he had no aptitude for pure form, that he was deliberately indistinct, that he could not draw, and, therefore, was only master of his materials in twilight. As far as this can be made a reproach to his art, it is by no means true. "Il ne faut laisser d'indécision dans aucune chose," he remarks in his note-book, when he made his first journey to Italy. He was too conscientious to have accepted any such compromise. Those who blame him for defective drawing insist on a kindred weakness in Velazquez, Rembrandt and Rubens. In the true artistic sense, to draw means nothing else than to paint: the capacity to fix an impression received through the eye, by means of pen or pencil, as well as brush, in accordance with the manner of the executant and the degree of perfection incident thereto. His manner was not that of the classicists, nor that of the Cinquecentisti. During his two years' sojourn in Rome, he never entered the Sistine Chapel, and when he returned fifteen years later, Michelangelo left him cold. He was, of course, indifferent to contour, as was natural in an artist who saw everything in large masses, for whom only forms and tones existed, or rather, indeed, only tones, but, who could create anything he wished with tone. His drawings, alike the earliest, the portraits of the milliners in the parental workshop, and the nymphs and dancers of his septuagenarian days, are made up of timid scratches. The child-like, self-taught character of his art is most apparent here. Where his drawing is restricted to the pure stroke, it is, in fact, mere memoranda, without any sort of artistic pretension. Sometimes the sheets are covered with little circles and squares, which, as André Michel tells us, were his shorthand notes. The circles denote light, the squares shadow. No one would dream of comparing such memoranda with masterly drawings, and, so far, therefore, the critics who say he drew badly are right. But as soon as he admitted tone to the paper, there was a change. Corot could make a landscape with three patches of shadow and as many strokes. It remained a very delicate structure, for its creator wished it to be mobile, that it might grow into the heart of the spectator. "Sa forme flottante," said Jean Rousseau, in his charming study, "semble toujours en mouvement. Plus écrite elle serait immobile." * This was true of his drawings no less than of his pictures. Their tenderness is without prejudice to their divine aroma. Millet waxed enthusiastic over them. His best drawings, notably those that stir dreamy reminiscences of the antique, are penetrated by the Corot-spirit. Renoir, and more especially Pissarro, recalled them later on, and there are many who recognise a childlike genius of the same order as Corot's in Bonnard's lithographed fantasies.

Tone was Corot's great medium. Form in a picture appeared to him solely in the sum of the values. "What there is to see in painting," he said once, "or rather, what I look for, is the form, the whole, the equilibrium of tones. Colour comes after this with me." Like Rembrandt, he made colour with light and shade. Français called him the Rembrandt of the open air. This is going a little too far. He appears as the lark beside the eagle, not, as he himself modestly declared, when compared with Rousseau, but certainly when compared with the greatest of Dutchmen. But who would dream of comparing grace with strength? Corot built a nest suitable to his genius. What great things were hatched in it, I hope presently to show.

* Jean Rousseau, "Camille Corot, suivi d'un Appendice par Alfred Robaut." (Paris, Librairie de l'Art, 1884.)

Corot was nearly thirty when he went to Rome to study seriously. He went as a pupil of Bertin, and normally he would have had as such to draw nourishment from the usual milch-cow, and become one of many. But, on the contrary, he treated Rome as if it had been one of the environs of Paris—a place where one could work from Nature just as well as outside the fortifications by the Seine. The old masters of marble and painting might never have existed, as far as he was concerned. He copied Nature, in his own manner, as faithfully as he could. His earliest pictures are comparatively prosaic. We are only just beginning to appreciate his early, and once despised period. This is a natural reaction from the exaggerated worship bestowed on the lyric pictures of his later years. Many of his earliest works verge on topography. Corot began at the beginning. He studied the world before he set out to conquer it. There is no very marked difference between his first Roman pictures, and those he painted before leaving France. The style seems to lie more in the choice of subject, in the pattern, and less in the handling. But beneath these externals the whole Corot is concealed. The oft-copied bridge across the Tiber with the dome of St. Peter's in the middle, and the tower of St. Angelo to the right, the somewhat later view of the Colosseum in the Louvre, and other little pictures of the same kind foreshadow the effect of space, the delicate colour, and subtle gradations of later masterpieces. The Roman motives are innumerable and amazingly various. His early landscapes differ as much as his later ones resemble each other. It seems as if he had assimilated as many forms as possible in order to evolve unity from them later on. Indeed, many a landscape of his first Roman sojourn served as the background for some enchanted festival later on. Thus the little wooded landscape of 1826 with the Colosseum in the background, formerly in the Doria Gallery, became the famous *Danse de Nymphes* of the Salon of 1850, now in the Louvre. The drawings of this period, too, are the most correct he ever made. They sometimes reveal a touching solicitude for accuracy of detail. But even then his hand played him the trick of desiring to give more than his eye had seen. The rocks range themselves into terraces, the groups of trees melt together in cadenced lines, the rhythm asserts itself. As yet, Corot resisted the poetic impulse, and strove to be guided by Nature rather than by himself. His Roman period served him to create the solid anatomy of the structure that was to shelter him later on, and part of the charm of this period may come from the suppressed poems we divine beneath the conscientious realism.

In 1828 he returned, laden with pictures, and now his wanderings through France began. He painted his first pictures of Ville d'Avray and Fontainebleau, the sea at Dieppe and Honfleur, the quays of the ancient Rouen of his school-days, and tried to extort the respect of his family by one or two careful portraits, which seemed to his distrustful relatives mere caricatures, in spite of their limpid intensity. The landscapes are still more or less in the nature of reconnaissances, brilliant topographical studies. In 1834 he went south for the second time. This time he stayed in North Italy, at Pisa, where he sketched the medallion of the Campo Santo, and at Florence where he found scenery ideally suited to his style in the Boboli Gardens. At Venice he drew the architectonic details of the Piazza with elaborate accuracy, and again brought a number of simple little pictures home.

In 1835 he first came forward with a certain assurance, exhibiting his first large picture, the *Hagar in the Wilderness*, at the Salon. The outcast Hagar kneels

DAUMIER: RATAPOIL, BRONZE
A. ROUART COLLECTION, PARIS

beside her sleeping boy in the foreground of a rocky landscape, and stretches her arms despairingly to Heaven.

We scarcely recognise Corot here. After the little pictures of the preceding period, in which he apparently follows submissively after Nature, the *Hagar* in the Gallimard collection appears like the work of another artist. The difference affects one almost unpleasantly, for it calls in question the very quality the earlier works had taught us to prize, an innocent sincerity. The *Hagar* is a conventional picture ; its relation to the Franco-Roman landscape school is obvious. The landscape is "composed" after the classic receipt, the figures introduced on the same principles, the motive may have been suggested by Benozzo Gozzoli in the Campo Santo of Pisa. And this superficial conventionality tempts us to overlook all there is of Corot in the picture.

The disappointment is, as a fact, the fault of the spectator himself. He who looks for a revolutionary in Corot will always be wide of the mark. The development of modern art is not derived from Corot; he took something from it and gave something to it, but he did not play the decisive part which Rousseau perhaps, of all his immediate contemporaries, most conspicuously filled. Rousseau brought a fervid conviction and an abnormally complex equipment to the task of creating a new landscape, in which there should be no particle of the ancient construction of Poussin and Claude, the French successors of the Venetians. The impulse to this movement came to him from the art most sharply opposed to that of the Italians, the art of Holland, and set him on the only possible road by which painting could again become the medium of an individual conception of Nature. Corot held aloof from this adventure. He was in Italy when the first of the new landscapes were painted. We must not forget that he was already a man when Rousseau, Dupré and Millet were born, that he survived Rousseau and Millet, that he died about three years before Courbet and Daubigny, and was working to the last hour of his life. He was thus in a position to embrace the entire development of the others. This he did, but he would not have been Corot if he had been merged therein. His originality lies in his strictly conditional assimilation of the modern tendency. A part of his nature clung to other things, and was no less pronounced a factor in his art.

Fromentin has described the conquest of the old Dutchmen by the Frenchmen of 1830 in one of his most brilliant chapters.* He sets Corot aside, declaring him to be as little of a Dutchman as might be. This remark in the mouth of a worshipper of the Dutchmen sounds almost like a reproach levelled at Corot to exalt Rousseau. Just as is the dictum in itself, nothing could be falser than such a critical conclusion. Setting aside personal results, it might fairly be urged, that if the conquest of the Dutch was important, the preservation of the French tradition was no less so ; that many great artists contributed to the first achievement, whereas the other task was, in all essentials, the work of one man.

If the time should ever come when the consideration of art should no longer be confined to the purely personal and obvious, in the contemplation of which the essential is so apt to be forgotten ; if we should ever learn to deal more intelligently with the mediums of our enjoyment, there will, no doubt, be a complete re-organisation of our museums. We shall see a new system of classification, not by countries or centuries, or any such arbitrary considerations, but by the nature of works, by the tendencies they illustrate. The spectator will no longer be called

* "Les Maîtres d'Autrefois," p. 276.

upon to perform a series of mental gymnastics in a gallery, leaping like an acrobat from one emotion to another, because every picture is in contrast to the next, and appeals to a different sensation ; a sense of comfort will enhance his pleasure in the work of art. Let us imagine a grouping of artists in families; the works of one man hung together, and not only so arranged, but further completed by his predecessors and successors. Science would not be the only gainer ; the layman would profit no less than the student. The homme moyen, who stands helplessly before an unknown artist, and turns for illumination to his Baedeker, would become familiar with many masters whom no art-histories can explain to him, if all that now seems strange and incomprehensible in their work—I am thinking more especially of the moderns—were set before him in its various stages of development. The connoisseur's enjoyment would also be increased, for the latent cause of all æsthetic sensation, a chaotic recollection of beautiful things evoked by a particular work, would be multiplied by the actual presence of a part at least of these elements. No one would lose in the process, for the work of art that suffered by such a family gathering—and perhaps there would be many such in the newer museums—would prove that it had no right to its place. As æsthetic maturity can only be attained by continuous comparison of works, and as the process recommended would stimulate both knowledge and enjoyment, it is strange that it should never have had a trial, and that the nearest approach to it should have been the grouping of artists into "schools," a system of classification which can give but a rough and ready suggestion of artistic affinities.

Were the plan I have suggested adopted, many unjustly depreciated masters would come to their own again. Among the forerunners of Corot, for instance, we should find the two favourites of the time of Louis XVI., Joseph Vernet and Hubert-Robert. Vernet was extravagantly appreciated by Diderot, who dared to rank him above Claude,* but succeeding generations were too ready to cast him aside with other débris of the past. Corot had no great admiration for the large landscapes extolled by Diderot, but, as his copy in the Cheramy collection shows, he studied the more intimate pictures of the painter of ruins, and owed them something of suggestion for what Diderot called "élever des vapeurs sur la toile," an art we note even in the earliest of the Roman pictures. In Hubert-Robert, he certainly cared less for the eternal architectural arrangements, once so admired by the Parisians, than for the more sincere little pictures, such as the *Water-Carrier* in the Louvre, where a delicate tone envelops the arabesque. With Vernet and Hubert-Robert we should have to group L. G. Moreau, whose Meudon pictures foreshadow the freshness of Corot's best time, and Simon Lantara, the first of the Fontainebleau masters, who was painting in the famous forest as early as the middle of the eighteenth century. In the circle of this remarkable vagabond we find further Hue and Huet, and a German, Ferdinand Kobell, who made some charming drawings in the style of the day.

Joseph Vernet and Hubert-Robert were in the van of the movement which brought about the return to the antique, the reaction from Watteau. They played a more important part in this double-edged achievement than David, who, coming after them, covered up many of the noble tendencies of this reaction with a frigid mask. Gabillot has shown this relation in a thoughtful work.† David adopted the antique as a revolutionary badge in opposition to the art of fallen

* "Hubert-Robert et son Temps" by C. Gabillot. (Paris, Librairie de l'Art, 1895.)
† Diderot's Salon of 1765.

tyranny. But, as a fact, the revival of the antique was the work of the same royal mind that created the eighteenth century. Just as in architecture the Louis XVI. style preceded the Empire, so the painters of Louis XVI. expressed in more delicate accents what the artists of the Revolution so vehemently proclaimed. This whole classic movement saw in the antique primarily Rome, whose more compact relics appeared of greater importance than those of Greece to those who were anxious to build. Gabillot calls the men of the Revolution "as little Greek as possible. They are above all Roman. They might have found patterns of heroism as easily in Athens and Sparta as in Rome. Their education impelled them to remain Romans."

There is nothing of this Roman antiquity in Corot. He turns from David's declamation to the milder influences of the eighteenth century, from which it is easy to find one's way still farther back into the past. Several of the landscape painters of the seventeenth century contributed to Corot's peculiar scenery, the earlier François Millet in particular. This artist was not always in his Opéra Comique vein ; he appears sometimes as a genuine painter, in the large landscape, for instance, in the Munich Pinacothek, where Dughet's languid atmosphere is replaced by the freshness of a Northern temperament, and where classic form has only served for the production of a new and natural vegetation. Or, to name one more among many, Moucheron was also of the number, Moucheron, who occasionally treated light after a fashion which seemed to us a new discovery two hundred years later, when our contemporaries essayed it. I recall the little river-landscape in the Stockholm Gallery, and similar things.

Millet and Moucheron are French names ; but the one first saw the light in Antwerp, and is reckoned among the Flemish masters, in spite of his sojourn in Paris from his youth to his early death, and the other, Frederick de Moucheron, was a native of Embden. If we bear in mind Corot's relation to these and many similar masters, we shall see that Fromentin's pronouncement as to Corot's entire independence of the Dutchmen must be accepted with certain reservations. In some of the Dutchmen of the purest blood, notably in Wynants, he might have found precedents for some of the most important aspects of Corot's art. All he would concede in this connection was that Corot too had worked at the canal to the Promised Land which Rousseau built. He did not see that Corot had established a communication for himself by continuing the relation of two centuries earlier, and at the same time, fulfilling the domestic law of French art, the fusion of Northern and Southern elements, to which all his glorious predecessors had conformed.

We shall find that Corot, nevertheless, eventually arrived at Barbizon. But this was not the most momentous stage in his development. His unconscious sympathy with the older masters was far more important. He succeeded in reinforcing his Virgilian poetry with the conviction of a purely natural instinct, and in combining faint reminiscences of the form which Poussin and Claude had made invincible, with the realism of a self-taught artist of the nineteenth century. He had, naturally, to steer past many cliffs on his voyage to the goal. One of these appears in his *Hagar*. This picture, which delighted all the critics of the old school, such as Lenormant, who scoffed at Corot's little pictures for their want of style, was inspired by the naïve conception that a Salon picture should be painted in the grand manner, and that the simplicity of the little pictures of nature would be insufficient here. But if the construction of the *Hagar* betrays compromise,

the veil of painting that overlies the classic skeleton is of a kind undreamt of by Michallon and Bertin. Tone plays a very important part in the work, veiling the romantic rocks, and animating the conventional emptiness of the background; we divine that Corot already held the threads of a brilliant and harmonious development in his hand.

So far, he stands apart from the beginnings of his contemporary, Millet. This difference shows us how high above Millet's exemplars of the forties was the tradition to which Corot had reverted. Millet had the misfortune to begin under Delaroche, and to receive the tradition from that uninspired source. Delaroche had given the Salon picture the character it still ventures to present to the public every year. The style of the large landscape compositions of the eighteenth century was empty and arid, but, as Corot showed, it could be vivified. Delaroche was always a still-born thing, without style, but with a secret willingness to flatter the evil instincts of the masses. Within the limits prescribed for him, Millet could have produced nothing but conventionalities, and his first attempts to please the public—attempts to which "his poverty and not his will consented"—are beneath criticism. After this false start, *The Winnower* of 1848 burst upon the world like a bomb. This, Millet's first real picture, bore but the slightest relation to his past. Perhaps the tragedy of this past was necessary, perhaps his enthusiasm would never have developed so freely, if he had not previously been held down by his unlucky beginnings. His whole art, indeed, the art of his whole circle to Van Gogh, has the explosive character of *The Winnower*. In Corot there is no trace of any such violent development. He showed his descent in his *Hagar*. To this he was faithful all his life, though his brilliant career illumined these beginnings with a retrospective lustre. He made his extremest compromise, to my mind, in his *St. Jerome* with the absurd lion of the year 1837. We need only look at Millet's picture of the same subject painted in 1846, or at his puerile nudities of the same period, to understand the wide difference between the parallel stages of development of the two artists. Corot's *Flight into Egypt* of 1839-40, and the contemporary *Monk* belonging to M. Moreau-Nélaton show the progress made since the *Hagar* and the *St. Jerome*.

We shall return presently to the large compositions related to these religious pictures. At the same time, seeking to give worthy expression to his piety, he made essays in purely ecclesiastical art. He went regularly to church on Sundays, and painted many church pictures. But the church in which he loved best to pray and to paint was outside, in the open air. Its pillars were his beloved trees, the birds its choristers, the sun was the preacher, and the holy angels became dancing Bayaderes. As early as 1836 he had painted a bathing *Diana* with her playmates. In the *Silenus* of the Salon of 1838 the nymphs dance in the wood for the first time.

The "eternal feminine" has a place in every true idyl. Corot remained unmarried all his life, but not on the same grounds as Menzel. Passion, of which Menzel had too little, was too strong in Corot to allow of his warming himself at a single flame. He never shook off the frou-frou of his mother's workshop, and was surrounded by women in advanced old age. He reminds us of Goethe here. His pictures were occasional poems, and they came to him spontaneously, like verses to the enamoured poet. We might suppose him to have first found himself, when he discovered the nymphs, and to have become his own master when he was forty years old. Man plays but a small part in his pictures. He left man

COROT: ST. SEBASTIAN

CHÉRAMY COLLECTION, PARIS

to Millet. Even when Millet paints a woman, he gives the male aspect of her personality, showing her as the fellow worker of the man. Corot devoted himself to the other sex. Even during his first stay in Rome we find him painting innumerable women of the people to a very small proportion of men. At first he treated them as he did his landscapes of the same period, with the utmost thoroughness, noting their costumes and using them for effects of colour. Later, in Paris, he painted all the pretty milliners who came in his way, and created his type, the young girl whose face we cannot well remember, of whose figure we divine but a few lines, of whom we scarcely know more than that we caught a glimpse of Happiness as she passed—a Nymph brushed by us ! As Collin said of him, he painted, not Nature, but his love of her, and this was peculiarly his fashion of treating Nature as revealed in woman. But the phrase has a still wider application. It is not so much the objects in his pictures that charm us, be they what they may, as the tone that envelops them, the peculiarly spheric quality of the handling. This achievement of tone is the Alpha and Omega of his development. He made considerable progress towards it on his third Italian journey. In 1843 he was in Rome again. We shall see presently what he gained on this occasion as a landscape-painter. It is hardly too much to say that landscape was an intermittent element in Corot's art, which comes to the front more prominently at certain periods, but never absorbs the artist entirely. We shall get a truer insight into his peculiar and very comprehensive nature, if we endeavour to bring out all the other elements, and if we take especial note of his development in the treatment of figures, which also personifies his artistic progress.

In Rome he no longer studied woman objectively, as he had done fifteen years earlier, but as an element of style for future pictures. Ingres, who directed the French Academy in Rome till 1841, exercised what I may call a localised, but not an unimportant influence upon Corot at this period. At the Salon of 1843, Corot exhibited a recumbent *Odalisque*, the inspiration of which was clearly due to Ingres' great picture in the Louvre.

This picture, now in the Hazard collection, is less than a third the size of the Ingres. It is also less magnificent, and lacks the exquisitely balanced arabesque of its prototype. But on the other hand, it is more fleshy, more human, more actual, and already points out the direction in which Corot was to surpass the great classicist. Ingres's brilliant figure unites every splendour of modelling and contour. But it does not breathe. Even in the soul of the most enthusiastic spectator, there is a sense of something lacking, something that is and must be absent in the very essence of this art. It is the old difference between the arabesque of a Quattrocento and the painting of a Rembrandt. With Ingres, line is so pliant an instrument for the magical suggestion of space, that we forget we have a carefully calculated, absolutely schematic effect before our eyes. It is only when we put an artist of the other school beside him, that we see how the natural instinct of the painter surpasses this scientific process. Corot, like Renoir after him, desired to retain the maximum of a composition, but he would not renounce a painter's vital nerve, the effect obtained by the division of the surface. Ingres' figures are lovelier than any of Corot's, but they are eternally alone, without light or air, brilliant objects. Corot sought to bring the beautiful dead to life. The picture mentioned above was not the first of his *Odalisques*. Gallimard owns a little picture of the same size, a *Nymph of the Seine** dated 1837, the first of this brilliant series. Here

* "L'Œuvre de Corot," Robaut—Moreau—Nélaton, No. 458.

we already note an effect of distance and atmosphere which is a secret to all mere painting. Ingres sought to concentrate everything in the one body, and surrounded it with other beautiful forms. Corot sought to blend his material with space, not only to harmonise his lines, but to make a continuous atmosphere of the whole. The progressive development of his Odalisques continued till he was past sixty; not a development of the type, but of the painting. The little picture of the recumbent nymph belonging to Katargy * was probably painted about the same time as the *Nymph* of the Hazard collection. The slender line of the body rises very little above the ground. In the course of fifty years this body seems to grow and take on broader, more majestic contours. The forms become rounder, the limbs learn movement, the flesh becomes more elastic, and finally, perfected beauty emerges. The *Toilette* appeared at the Salon of 1859. We might almost suppose that Corot foresaw his future course, when we find him initiating the maturest of the works he dedicated to woman, with this picture of a young woman decking herself for some festival, enveloped in the tender atmosphere of Spring. The toilette is being made in the open air, among birch-trees, on the margin of a little pool. The attendant fastens an ornament carefully into the hair of the naked beauty, who raises her hands to her head to help, dreaming the while, like one of Chassériau's meditative figures. The attitude is divine. The attendant stands as close as possible to her, leaving only the line of her back free to the air. The rich lines of the profile are brought together by the gown of the servant, the simple outline of which encloses the group on the left side, so that the outside of the group towards the open air forms a quiet, compact line, whereas on the inner side the movement is very effectively developed and allows of the strongly marked projection of the knee. The spectator receives an impression that this naked being is securely protected, a mingling of pleasure in the form and enjoyment of the intimité of the scene. The beautiful proportion between the group and the upper part of the picture, the happy shape and size of the canvas, and above all, the characteristic handling contribute to this impression. For the colour, the master relied on the emphasis of the brush-stroke and the differentiation of the modelling. The only strong tone is the yellow in the dress of the maid, which is deliberately painted in a more material and vehement fashion than the rest, to balance the vaporous surface of the naked flesh. This vapourous effect pervades the whole picture. It seems to lie in the atmosphere, which fills both group and landscape with warm life.

In an analysis of Corot, it is difficult to avoid a term which has been so mischievously applied, that one uses it unwillingly. I fear to suggest a false idea, by describing Corot as chaste ; for in the first place, the quality for which I can find no other word, forms no part of the accepted doctrine of abstinence, and in the second, it exposes one to the danger of collision with those didactic æsthetes who have made their conception of this virtue a criterion of art, and have too long wearied mankind therewith. In Corot we find neither negation nor affirmation of the sexual element, but that higher virtue, which first demands beauty from what is sensual, before inquiring whether it is moral : the purity of the healthy. Corot does not avoid the sweet magic of love, but he shows it only in its happy aspects, as a Paradise where there is no need for repentance, where all its joys are set to the rhythm of dancing feet and measured movement. This applies to his composition, to the happy idiosyncrasy which makes him express desire in dance and song.

* "L'Œuvre de Corot," Robaut—Moreau—Nélaton, No. 54c.

COROT: THE TOILET (1859)

DESFOSSÉS COLLECTION, PARIS

But this joyful chastity also manifests itself instinctively in his treatment of details, his touch, his handwriting. It makes up the loose texture of his painting, his moderation in material, his involuntary hesitation to unveil beauty, that interweaving of airy threads, that unuttered harmony which carries us back to our youth, to the time when we wept and laughed for no particular reason, and saw the world spread out before us, a glistening net full of pearls and precious stones.

Corot's chastity lies in the fairy element he breathed into love. He idealised it in a credible fashion, by making the atmosphere the symbol. Bathed in this vapourous magic, his women, painted in the sixties, take on a brilliant loveliness. In 1865, the same year in which another art hero, Manet, set forth his ideal in his *Olympia*, Corot exhibited his *Nymph reclining on a Tiger-Skin** and his *Nymph reclining on the Sea-Shore*,† the final result of the figure first created nearly thirty years before. Among these numerous Odalisque-pictures there is one, painted rather earlier, perhaps the most surprising thing in Corot's whole work, which would alone have sufficed to immortalise him, the *Bacchante with the Panther*. This is not one of Decamps' quadrupeds ; it has nothing in common with Delacroix' bloodthirsty beasts, nor with Barye's stealthy great cats. Corot has put a naked child to ride upon his panther. I do not think he painted it from life, though the skin makes a magnificent effect. Rather did he find it in that fairer world, where Titian also saw it, yoked with its fellow to the car of Bacchus, when the victorious god flamed forth upon Ariadne ; where Poussin found it later too, in the same Dionysiac cortège whence enthusiastic Greeks once lured it into gleaming reliefs. The group occupies the foreground of a faintly indicated landscape, and extends nearly the whole length of the long canvas. The panther and the nymph are almost on the same plane, both in sharp profile, so that the antithesis of the long outstretched feminine limbs and the heavy beast is strongly emphasised. In her extended hand the nymph holds out a dead bird to the panther. The curve of her arm, completed by the little chubby rider, seems to have surprised the most secret charms of beauty.

Ingres' supremacy was at an end. In 1864 Corot received twice as many votes in the election to the Jury of the Salon. And yet there was something of Ingres in this remote contemporary of that angry lion. A fragment of the divine form to which Ingres had dedicated his life, too precious to fall a victim to the stormy future, was clothed by Corot in magic garments and borne up to unapproachable heights.

We can understand that Corot should have disliked Manet. The assailant of modelling, the most essential process of the old masters, was incomprehensible to him, and his preference for Courbet was a result of the different attitude adopted by the latter on this question, and his skill in maintaining it. Beyond this, there was nothing in common between the figure-painter Corot and Courbet save this—that he was not a figure-painter only. He had other peers before his eyes, was still dreaming, while the rest were formulating, and continued to make poems after Courbet had declared all poetry to be ignoble. Hals and Goya, who penetrated to him in France, did not disturb his idyl. That which they gave to the younger men, he had always found in the land of his dreams, where Giorgione and Correggio had lived. Poussin expanded his form, but remained comparatively alien to him. The splendour of the *Bacchanalia* was not revealed to his timidity.

* L'Œuvre de Corot, No. 1377. † *Ibid.* No. 1376.

On the other hand, he adored Giorgione as Poussin adored Titian. He strove to give naked figures in landscape the glow of the *Concert champêtre*. Lacking Giorgione's colour and his splendour, he had the same infinitely human sentiment which raises Giorgione above his more gorgeous successors. In Corot's case, this sentiment sprang from a much less serious temperament. Its sincerity was compatible with laughter, nay, with exuberance, and this gaiety of temper found an ideal comrade in Correggio. After Prud'hon, who has been called the French Correggio, no one, Diaz not excepted, approached the painter of the *Leda* so closely as Corot. The point of view from which he saw him differed from that of Prud'hon and Diaz. Prud'hon had no greater ambition than to identify himself with the beloved master. Diaz, with his enthusiasm for the Italians, sometimes approached his prototypes so closely, that his exquisite idyls collide with an alien world of feeling. Corot, on the other hand, dreamt before Correggio, as before Nature. He looked from a greater distance, where the precise outlines of bodies were lost, and retained but something of the sum of many gestures. In some of his groups of dancing nymphs we might fancy we see the Berlin *Leda* multiplied indefinitely and proportionately reduced. Scene, atmosphere, the whole structure of the picture is more remote from Correggio than Delacroix from Rubens. But through all the differences the hereditary strain makes itself felt, and awakes in us something of the pleasure we feel, when, looking into a mirror, we recognise traces of honoured progenitors.

Corot ennobled Correggio ; he set the sensuous beauty of the *Leda* in a wider, breezier space, evoked legends yet more poetic, went back, his eyes still fixed on the master, to greater and more distant times, when the gods were seen in bodily shape among men, and dictated the Odes to Virgil. The chastity I have ascribed to him is the antique spirit, which distinguishes him from Correggio. It is said that he learnt Greek in his old age, to enable him to read Theocritus in the original. It is certain that he had a closer affinity with the Greeks than his contemporaries. And it is for this reason that he seems to us of such far-reaching importance. We have seen how the classicism of Joseph Vernet's circle was distorted by David to pseudo-Romanism. Prud'hon resisted this tendency with a gentle determination. In his delicious drawings at Chantilly, in the Louvre, &c., rather than in his large pictures, we find the reflex of a freer art ; they suggest the spirit that was never amalgamated with the massive body of Roman antiquity—Hellas. Corot ventured to paint in this fashion, and even more resolutely than Prud'hon, banished all reminiscences of ancient Rome, in order to bring himself the more closely into communion with an ideal Hellas. This ideal he did not discern in the sculpture of the ancients. David would have found him even less akin to himself than Prud'hon. Corot evolved his ideals from his dreams. He painted landscape — the genre David's school pronounced contemptible—took it from the environs of Paris, and painted it in the Greek spirit. Instead of Hubert Robert's ruins, he set little naked maidens in it, who seem classical to us now, though no one would have dared to call them so fifty years ago. He did what Poussin and Claude succeeded in doing in the same natural manner. In his review of the Salon of 1857, About wrote that Corot had seen things in Nature, which had escaped the two great masters of the seventeenth century.*

It would be unjust to place the later artist above his predecessors on this account. Poussin and Claude were to their age what Corot was to his, and he could never

* Nos Artistes au Salon de 1857.

have become what he was, had they not shown him the path he was to follow. These two had already breathed a new spirit into the things of antiquity, had given to the light in a picture the action formerly reserved for sharply defined outlines, and had completed the great inventions of Veronese and Tintoretto. The eighteenth century pondered long on this tradition. Corot did not only ponder it, but worked it out, and made such an advance on the old path, that we are apt to forget what had already been accomplished. We may say that he is more natural than his predecessors, without reproach to Poussin and Claude. He was more natural, because the whole world has become more natural. He is not less of a poet, not less classical; and this is a rare distinction to-day. The mingling of his tender songs with the resonant fanfares of the new art has rejoiced many hearts.

To that Salon of 1857 described by About, Corot sent seven pictures, among them five masterpieces, which secured the recognition of the sexagenarian painter even by the general public. The first, the *Concert Champêtre*, which belonged to Dupré, and was bought after his death by the Duc d'Aumale for Chantilly, was an old picture; it had already figured at the Salon in 1844, but, simplified and improved, it delighted the same people who had then passed it over. Others were: the *Destruction of Sodom*,* the *Ronde de Nymphes*, and a *Shepherdess* on the outskirts of a wood, at sunset.

Thèophile Gautier, who had already sung the painter's praises in 1839, now wrote enthusiastically of his "verdures elyséens" and "ciels crépusculaires." The epithets might lead one to suppose the master a comrade of Delacroix. Reminiscences of the *Dante's Boat* were remote enough from the spirit of Corot, as I have tried to picture it. The Romanticism of the one had nothing in common with the idyllic poetry of the other. They were, in fact, two extremes, almost two worlds. On the one hand, the flamboyant colourist, the turbulent temperament, the audacious dramatist; on the other, the singer who veiled his pastorals in tender tones. But great artistic personalities are so richly endowed that they are rarely essentially antithetical. They cannot be exhaustively summed up by the coarse standards we apply to the average man. Their gentleness has its abysses, their passion its calm oases, and we shall know them but imperfectly, if we ignore the contradictions that complete their nature. In Corot's *Christ in the Garden of Olives*, of 1849,† Delacroix' famous picture of the same name, transformed by its passage through a more peaceful imagination, lies as if under a veil. In the *Destruction of Sodom* Delacroix' influence is very apparent. When Corot painted it originally, in 1843, he was a stranger to Delacroix, and, as far as we can judge by a contemporary reproduction, his composition was a classic one, in the spirit of his *Hagar*. Fourteen years later he repainted the picture, modified the shape and size, and gave the composition that dramatic unity of form, which seems a touching renunciation of his idyllic preferences. Shortly before, he had painted the *St. Sebastian*, already mentioned, in the painting of which—notably in the sketch—Delacroix' peculiar hatching is employed. In the *Dante and Virgil* of 1859 there are similar affinities. But the influence of Delacroix is most obvious in the *Macbeth* of the same year. The visitor to the Wallace Museum, where so many surprises await one in connection with the art of French Romanticism, stands astounded before this large picture. There is a tremendous dramatic verve in the three witches, and the two riders on the startled

* This too had appeared in a different form at the Salon of 1844.

† In the Langres Museum.

horses in the ghostly, lurid landscape, and at first glance we should be less astonished to find Delacroix' name in the inscription, than that of the actual author. We have but to turn, however, to the neighbouring picture, Delacroix' gorgeous *Execution of the Doge*, to see how great the difference really is. The Corot looks dark beside this. He did not abandon his own more discreet manner, but it is as if some stirring event had taken place in the life of the lyric poet, inspiring him, the limner of gentle shepherdesses, to a mightier form of speech. I know not if this obvious influence is to be referred to any particular picture of Delacroix'. It is possible that Corot may have seen Chassériau's version of the subject, which approaches Delacroix very closely. When, in 1867, he saw his *Macbeth* again at the great Exhibition, he could not refrain from certain sarcasms at his own expense. This same brooding Romanticism lurks in certain other pictures. In the Stedelijk Museum at Amsterdam, Delacroix' great *Flight of Medea* hangs in the same room with Corot's *Contrebandiers*, the night-piece with the smugglers' horses in the gloomy ravine. Here again we note a faint reflection of the painter of the *Medea*.

The two artists first became acquainted in their later years, probably through their common friend Dutilleux. In 1847 Delacroix visited Corot's studio, and recorded the happy impression made upon him by the *Beautés Naïves*.* Corot, less swift to form an opinion, came to admire Delacroix more and more as years went by. He had many tendencies in common with him, notably his veneration for Correggio, whom Delacroix ranked with Michelangelo, and may well have had more sympathy with the nobility of mind which breathed from every aspiration of the great painter and great man, than many of his contemporaries. He admired him, above all, as a monumental painter, as the author of the ceiling in the Louvre and of the large religious subjects, and it was perhaps Delacroix' example which moved him to try his own powers in this field.

Corot as a monumental painter is an almost unknown entity. Nor can we justly give him such a pretentious title, for his highest art is not to be found in these essays. They indicate rather a quantitative expansion of his rich activity than a new aspect of his genius; but this quantum contains so many fine things that we cannot pass it by as insignificant. His first attempt was typical of him. Robaut tells us † that Corot arrived one day at the beginning of the forties to visit his friend Robert at Mantes, and found workmen beginning to paint the bathroom. The artist forthwith begged his "worthy colleagues" to make way for him. He happened to have no implements with him, so he took the brushes and colours of the house painters, supplemented them as well as he could at the local colourman's, and set to work. The room was small and ill-proportioned, like most bath-rooms. Nothing daunted, Corot decorated the six panels of this cupboard in a French villa with as many *Souvenirs d'Italie* without any sort of preparation or anything to guide him save his recollection. There is at least one picture among the six, an oblong dessus-de-fenêtre with a view of the Grand Canal at Venice, which repays a journey to Mantes.

The decorations of the little kiosque in the garden of the house at Ville d'Avray, which Corot painted in 1847 for his old mother's birthday, must have been a more charming achievement, for here great care was taken to harmonise the

* Delacroix "Journal," March 14, 1847.

† In "L'Art" for December 7, 1879. The panels are reproduced in "L'Œuvre de Corot," under Nos. 435 to 440.

VERMEER OF DELFT: VIEW OF DELFT

HAGUE MUSEUM

various panels, and the dimensions suited the painter. Robaut very unjustly ranks these panels below those of the Mantes bath room, because the different landscapes seemed to him insufficiently individualised.* This deficiency was, in fact, due to a preference for a general effect, as far as we can now judge. One of the two largest panels, on which the little house itself is painted, is among Corot's most fascinating works. The other pictures complete and extend this fascination. Any stronger emphasis would have disturbed the idyl. The purity of the warm summer harmony is of a far higher order than the improvisation at Mantes, which, happy as it is, does not express Corot's highest gift, his melody.

Shortly before, he had painted the *Baptism of Christ* for the Church of St. Nicolas du Chardonnet in Paris, fortunately not on the wall, but on canvas. It is one of his largest pictures, almost four metres high, and is Corot's most precious contribution to monumental art in the conventional sense. The treatment is akin to that of the Cinquecentisti, and the traditional action is retained ; but as such, it loses all essential importance in the soft shadow in which Corot envelops it, and becomes a new element in the landscape in which it takes place. Before this perfect harmony, we sympathise with the enthusiasm of Delacroix, who recognised a kindred spirit here. The same art, simplified, reappears in the four frescoes of the church at Ville d'Avray. Here the landscape only serves as tone for the background, but on the other hand, the scenes themselves, notably the *Expulsion from Paradise*, are much more individual in style. Unfortunately, their position above the windows is so unfavourable, that the spectator can hardly enjoy them to the full.†

The fourteen scenes from the Passion in the village church of Rosny near Mantes, and also the large *Flight into Egypt*, Corot's Salon picture of 1840, at the same place, have been so barbarously neglected by the local clergy that they are already mere ruins. To the same period belong the four landscape panels painted at Decamps' house at Fontainebleau, and afterwards in the possession of Sir Frederick Leighton, and the four small ovals in Louis XV. panelling, at the Château of Gruyères, in Switzerland. In the sixties, when Daubigny exchanged his floating studio on the Oise for a more stable summer residence at Auvers, Corot painted some of his most beautiful decorative compositions on the new wall of his friend's house. The largest of these served as pendant to a *Don Quixote* by Daumier, and showed in the background the two typical Cervantes-figures which Daumier painted so often.

This does not exhaust the list, but enough has been said to indicate the nature of these works. They differ from the rest mainly in dimension, and by a grace of handling even more airy and vapourous than usual. They have hardly added much to his fame, and are indeed merely the overflow of an inexhaustible energy. Yet they serve as a key to the right understanding of the master. They also help to explain Corot's attitude to the most important school of the nineteenth century, with which he has been too hastily confounded. A consideration of his work as a landscape painter will throw further light on this point.

The Romantic element we have noted in the master, and his affinity to Delacroix, disappear in the decorative side of his art. The yearning that breaks into fervid psalmody in S. Sulpice and the Louvre ceiling is denied to the mild

* "L'Œuvre de Corot," Nos. 600 to 607. The panels are now in the possession of Lemerre, of Paris.

† "L'Œuvre de Corot," Nos. 1074 to 1077, and 2311 to 2314.

poetry of the gentle dreamer. Taken in conjunction, these two artists sum up the genius of their people. Corot's simple poetry springs, not from the "fine frenzy" of Puget, whom Delacroix venerated above all his predecessors, but from the gracious gardeners of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whose spirit still adorns the art of our neighbours at times.

We might typify the art of the Primitives by a figure of a saint, that of the florescence of the older painting by the portrait of a dignified man, that of the eighteenth century by a pastoral scene. Our own period might be summed up in a landscape. Here Painting—the isolated art—found a domain, in which the lack of tradition was not a drawback, but an advantage. Its full possibilities could only be revealed when individuals had gained sufficient vigour to insist on themselves in art. Antique art ignored landscape. Ecclesiastical art had used glimpses of the country for backgrounds. The Dutchmen of the seventeenth century, who had no dealings either with the antique or with the Church, did not, even with their glorious works, debar the future from taking possession of the domain as of a newly discovered land. Indeed, what Ruysdael, Hobbema, van Goyen, and Aert van der Neer began, seemed rather to call for a continuation.

Conditions so favourable to a modern development inhered in no other field of the artistic heritage. Our unfitness to treat the votive picture is obvious, and the reasons are clear to every layman. But even in portraiture, the full splendour of the old masters is denied to us, and we delude ourselves if we see full compensation for this in our manner of characterisation. It is not a fact that our portraits reproduce our epoch as those of the old painters reproduced theirs. The difference, however, must not lead us to conclude that there is a difference in artistic capacity. We cannot paint portraits as the early artists did. The intensity with which the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries applied themselves to this branch has made way for other tendencies, and had, in fact, to yield the ground in order to make other and more appropriate concentrations possible to us.

Thus, looked at from this distance, the doctrine of the unimportance of subject seems hardly tenable. We cannot say that what is represented is of no moment, if whole epochs have indeed shown a more perfect mastery of one thing than of another, though it is folly to accept the easily recognised results of habit as sufficiently important to justify an application of general rules to particular cases, and a laying down of laws for the guidance of individual talents. The superstition of the Classicists, that landscape in itself was unworthy of a painter's brush, the narrowness of Valenciennes, the painter and æsthete of the Revolution, who condemned Claude Lorrain as too realistic, because "the gods, demi-gods, nymphs, and satyrs were absent from his beautiful scenes," and built up a thesis about landscape on such premises,* were thoroughly pernicious. And something of this superstition still clings to the amateur of the present day, whose admirations are confined within certain limits prescribed by the title of the work, and who cares only for landscape, or still-life, or imaginative subjects. He is unconscious that he says little as to the beautiful by such classification, and merely betrays some little personal defect of organisation, which dulls his perceptions as a tiny crack in china deadens the ring of the vessel.

* "Elements de perspective pratique à l'usage des Artistes, suivis de réflexions et conseils sur le genre du paysage." Paris, l'an viii.

The votive picture was a suitable form in olden times, because the painter had mastered it, because so many generations had worked at it, that finally the artist who had special aptitudes for this subject was evolved. The portraits of the old masters were not only presentments of this or the other patron, but reproductions of a norm created by the age, a variation of the author according to the features of the sitter, and therefore something altogether different to what we now mean by the term. This means that even then the supposed subject was in reality form. When David recommended his much-praised pupil, Gros, to paint a serious historical picture, he really had his beloved antique in his mind.

Landscape marked out a new track. It created new conceptions, new methods of turning these conceptions into pictures, new forms. For the older painters, who thought only man worthy of representation, all nature outside of humanity was a mere residuum. To the landscape-painter, man lost this isolated importance ; the artistic conception became pantheistic. And with his importance, man lost the world of forms which had gathered round him. The great arabesque evolved from the contours of nude bodies was inapplicable to planes with fields and woods and the sky in the background. Curves gave way to straight lines. And as the curve had brought with it a whole cosmos of rounded forms, so the straight line brought with it a world of strokes and angles of every kind, comparable to the furrows left by a spade in the soil. But even the landscape painters had no idea of renouncing the delineation of man. They brought him back, but no longer in the form he had when the dramatic curve played about him. He became the man of landscape, treated with the peculiarities of a method, which had accustomed the painter to observe light on large surfaces. The new man was a part of the new cosmos, a subject, where he had formerly reigned a king.

Corot was not more a landscape painter fundamentally than was Poussin, though we must not under-estimate Poussin's landscape. He was not exclusively a landscape painter. But was any great artist ever exclusive in this sense ? If Rembrandt had painted only portraits, he would have remained the seer and the visionary ; had he painted nothing but legends, he would have been none the less the great mathematician. Indeed, was not all he did at once portraiture and legend ? Is there any art which does not combine the two even in the least complex subject ?

Corot was a landscape painter in so far as he lived in the nineteenth century and expressed himself in the language of his age. If we take this expression in detail, it differs little from that of any other great landscape painter, yet he appears as a great poet by the side of excellent prose-writers. It was not the nymphs in his pictures which gave him this advantage, but his perfect freedom in dealing with a form created by himself and others (perhaps, indeed, more by others than by himself), a form which kept those others fettered to details. He appears to us as he did to the following generation of 1870, a greater personality, a richer artist, in whom the result of development achieved a more concentrated form.

He himself was quite unconscious of his pre-eminence among the younger men of his day. He attributed his unique position solely to his close adherence to the ancient French tradition, and felt himself an alien among his comrades at Barbizon. The tales of his intimate relations with Rousseau's circle are purely apocryphal. Artists are, and must be, perverse in their judgments to some extent. Corot himself, despite his amenity, was no exception to the rule. He once confessed to Sensier that he could not take pleasure in the "art nouveau" ; by "new art"

he meant Millet ; ten years earlier he had meant Delacroix. And these two must have been infinitely more sympathetic to him than such men as Cabat, Flers, Dupré, and more especially Rousseau. To the Barbizon artists he appeared a compromiser, venerable, nevertheless, because he was "le brave Père Corot," but to some extent vieux jeu. Moreau-Nélaton speaks of an "antagonisme inavoué mais réel" * on the part of the Barbizon artists, and quotes contemporaries. We can read something of the sort between the lines in Fromentin. We have hinted at the essential reason for such an attitude in our consideration of the relation of the men of 1830 to the Dutch landscape painters. The former prided themselves on being pure landscape painters, working only from Nature, and adduced this as a proof of their sincerity. As a fact, they sat rather longer out of doors, and painted as they looked, whereas Corot worked without so many glances at the model ; a purely superficial difference, proceeding from the familiar fiction of a difference of kind. Corot painted nymphs; that was enough for the foes of compromise !

But beneath the play of the nymphs there lay indeed a difference, which neither party took into account : Corot was a painter of tone, the others were colourists. In each case this essential argument must be completed by certain no less essential reservations.

We have seen how tone was the most decisive factor in Corot's development, how he brought it into the world with him, so to speak, for even in his first Roman days, when he painted the delicious views of the Tiber Bridge, and was intent merely on the collection of data, he bathed his objects in a vapourous envelope. How abnormal such a beginning was among painters without Corot's specific tendency may be seen if we recall the first Italian essays of such a gifted colourist as Bonington ; those which deal with the same prospect are merciless in their hardness.

This danger never existed for Corot. His art was as sensitive as his personality. But just as his proverbial kindliness of heart was combined with immense physical strength, so also his pliant form overlay an elementary vigour, which preserved that pliancy from sentimental inanity.

During his second sojourn in Rome in 1843, we saw him in search of a form for his pictures of women. At about the time when he produced the *Destruction of Sodom*, he painted a series of his finest landscapes. The pearl of these, the *Gardens of the Villa d'Este at Tivoli*, with the boy on the wall, is in the rich collection of M. Henri Rouart, of Paris. This little picture has all the poetry of the famous views of the Villa Medici in the Prado, painted when Velazquez was still in the making, before he had got his generalising tone and grand style. The veil that hangs over the *Gardens of the Villa d'Este* is still transparent. The shadow conceals nothing we desire to see. The colour consists of a wealth of distinct gradations, which, although they include the most delicate nuances, are granular throughout, and so add continually to the richness of the effect. It is as if we were enjoying some luscious fruit, and finding our enjoyment intensified by a slight resistance in the texture. At Tivoli the natural accidents were all in Corot's favour, the combination of architecture and rich vegetation, the picturesque outlook. But he triumphs, too, where his material is less pictorial, as in M. Rouart's other example† or in M. Moreau-Nélaton's *Cascatelles*, or the remarkable little *Genzano* in the Cheramy collection. In hundreds of landscapes painted

* "L'Œuvre de Corot," i. p. 240. † *Ibid.* No. 454.

COROT: GENZANO (1843)
CHERAMY COLLECTION, PARIS

the following year, Corot continued on the same road, now enclosing a far horizon within his frame, in order to paint the vapourous distance of a quiet foreground, now following the country folks along the highways or in the meadows, to paint the intimate relation between man and nature in warm tones, now—as in the silent pool of the Sarlin collection, which delighted us at the Centennial Exhibition—enwrapping himself and us in solitude. There is a divine peace in this Nature, we feel as if we were unnoticed spectators of the scene. Our eyes travel along with the little, contented people of the pictures, wander over the thickets and between the trees, and linger calmly on the houses and steeples. They are all familiar things, though we have never seen the spot. We do not even yearn for them, so close do we seem to them. It is as if the air of the pictures were playing about us also.

This rich epoch of Corot is modified by two distinct tendencies. In the one he yields to his poetic impulse, and devotes himself to tone, to the silvery-gray light that suits his nymphs so well, and forgets a good many other things. In the other he becomes a colourist.

Will the silver-gray landscapes with nymphs always retain their present popularity? It is probable that they will with the public, for they are the lightest wares of the master's treasure-house. But the true worshipper of Corot's muse will perhaps some day prize the animation of the nymphs less than the animation of the brush in certain less monotonous pictures. The *Matinée* with the dancing nymphs is the example every visitor to the Louvre prefers at first; the picture is easy to grasp, the loose play of the technique captivates at a glance. But this same looseness is perhaps to blame, if the spectator is not kept in thrall, and if he feels a certain chill in his admiration, when he finds the same quality in many others of the famous pictures. We are, very rightly, fastidious in art. We have all the more right to be so, especially with the greatest masters, because they owe us what we give to them. The new place they conquer in our affections, not always without a certain loss to us, the novelty they force upon us, their whole claim is only justified, if we feel the necessity for their new form. This necessity becomes dubious at once, when form degenerates into mannerism.

Mannerism, though we recognise it readily in every exhibition, is difficult to define. The term implies repetition; we use it to reproach the artist for always achieving the same result, for allowing himself to be governed by admiration of himself, rather than by an artistic impulse. On the other hand, repetition is an element in art, for without it there could be no style, either in individual works, or in the whole achievement of an artist. But it becomes a defect, where it ceases to be an advantage. Manner becomes mannerism, when the necessity for it no longer appears absolutely logical, where it does not embrace every portion of the work it has moulded, but leaves empty spaces. Manner is an artistic medium as long as it serves its purpose perfectly, and does not disturb the harmony of the subjective and objective, the elementary antecedent of every work of art. Mannerism is the subject without object, originality without consciousness, the husk without the kernel, the exaggeration of an element pleasing to the artist or to his public, at the expense of the whole. As these definitions converge to a point where the line of division between manner and mannerism is exceedingly slight, both may sometimes be shown in the same artist, or even occasionally in the same work, and then, of course, mannerism can only represent a delicate shade. This is the case in certain of Corot's landscapes. By a concatenation of effects, he produced a phenomenon

which we learnt to love as his atmosphere. It is a ladder of carefully weighed effects, which can only be achieved if the painter thinks solely of the work in hand, and forgets himself entirely. We mount the ladder for our enjoyment, and looking down from it, see only the sum of these enchantments. With a much loved master, we fly up the steps without counting them, almost without touching them : a glance, and we are with him. His manner is so pronounced and has become so familiar to us, that a nod suffices us. All the more securely, therefore, should the artist build his ladder, for those who mount it are never the same. It must be strong enough for eternity, strong enough to lead men up to Heaven as long as the house stands.

This solidity of structure is sometimes wanting in the famous silver-gray landscapes. The steps are half effaced, built up too hurriedly. Pictures which should impress us by their depth, appear flat, or depth is suggested by flimsy devices. The nymphs, who should be but the accessories of an exquisite landscape, dance in a scene that fails to conceal all traces of the theatre from which it was sometimes derived. The gray into which we would fain gaze, as in other Corots, without fathoming its depths—the haze that consists, not of gray paint, but of a thousand other things—covers a thin canvas all too superficially. It is still very beautiful. The Louvre has none of the finest examples of this genre. For these we must go to the *Baigneuses* of the Henri Rouart collection, and those belonging to Cuvelier and Coats, the *Bath of Diana* in the Bordeaux Museum, the *Nymphs* at Chantilly, and at Arnold and Tripp's, or the *Pastorale* in the Glasgow Gallery. In all these there are imperishable qualities. There is a wide difference between the occasional mannerism of Corot the artist, and the occasional artistry of Besnard the mannerist ! If Corot had produced nothing else, he would have made good his title to our veneration. But we ought not to exalt this art as his principal achievement, or lavish admiration on the very things which are open to criticism.

It was no mercenary weakness that seduced Corot into mannerism, nor any falling off in his powers. Others took the easy downward path when their years were fewer and their achievement far less than his, but, as we shall see, Corot retained his vigour to the end. I believe it was his very generosity and good nature which made the little flaw in many admirable works ; the wish to give pictures, just as he gave money, to make others happy—a nonchalance, which, far removed from the introspective, self-exasperating dæmon of Delacroix, and the egotism of genius, lacked the grain of poison that great men must bear within them to preserve their works.

But, if it be just to make such reservation, we must beware of over-hasty generalisations. In certain over-enlightened art circles, this reservation has long become a stock phrase, and instead of enumerating the relatively small proportion of questionable works, all the later art of Corot is rejected. This is far more unjust than it would be to make no mention of the exceptions.

For they are exceptions. They were not due to Corot's old age, nor even to a period of his old age, but to a certain kind of picture, extending over many years, and in many cases contemporary with works which the least appreciative could not describe as senile. The *Matinée* appeared at the Salon of 1851, and was painted the year before. Corot was then fifty-four, a relatively young man. The most brilliant works in the manner of *La Matineé* were all later; it must be admitted that there were examples even more mediocre than *La Matinée* among them, as, for instance, the *Souvenir d'Italie* in the Louvre. But we need only pass into the

next room, where hang the Corots of the Thomy Thiéry collection, to find later works quite modern in conception, before which our reservations melt away like soap bubbles.

With such pictures we might construct a new epoch in the life of Corot. He seems, indeed, to have renewed his powers between his fiftieth and sixtieth years. Or was it only that he adopted new methods, and changed from a painter of tone to a colourist?—a colourist who worked with a broad, frank brush, and, far from dreaming of nymphs in mists, made spontaneous records of Nature.

No psychology can account for the simultaneous practice of two manners so totally different. Even the Corot who exhibited three such pictures, all of about the same dimensions, as the *Macbeth*, the *Toilette*, the *Cache-Cache*, is a hard nut for the art-philosopher to crack. But it must further be remembered that at the same time he was painting like a richer, blonder Constable, and producing faithful studies of Nature by hundreds. The perception we gain from witnessing the logical development of our contemporaries—a Monet or a Liebermann—finds many a riddle in the serene idyllist, Corot. It would seem as if art must have been something less subjective to him, since he was able to evolve such varied phenomena therefrom, and yet it is difficult to imagine more direct "impressions" than the gems of the Thomy Thiéry collection.

All these works were painted in his last period, and, in so far as they lay stress on colour, they show an obvious relation to the Barbizon painters, from whom he seemed at one time so remote. It is possible that one of the youngest members of the great landscape school, and, perhaps, the most important, Daubigny, had something to do with this approximation.

Corot was on terms of close friendship with Daubigny, who, in 1840, exhibited a *St. Jerome in the Desert*, which may have appealed to the master. Twelve years later they met in Dauphiné, and were obviously mutually helpful. Daubigny had meantime shaken off all classicism, and had freed himself from the influence of Delaroche no less thoroughly than Millet. From this time forth Corot seems to have adopted a more energetic touch, more decisive colour, something of the more luscious technique of the younger artist. His planes begin to glisten.

In the Mesdag Museum at the Hague, where a worthy altar has been raised to Daubigny, we can compare the two. Corot's *Allée* (No. 69), with its pure, fluid greens and dazzling touches of white, harmonises well with the rapid, less rhythmical sketches of Daubigny.

This phase of Corot's had probably been prepared by Constable, who gave the strongest possible impetus to all the Frenchmen of his time. Corot first visited England in 1861, but he may have seen enough of the Englishman's work before this in Paris. *Le Gué*, the early picture with the loaded rack-waggon in a pool,* bears a certain superficial likeness to the *Hay Wain*, though it has nothing of Constable's handling. Of this we find more indication in certain studies executed in the forties, as for instance, the *Rosen*, the finest Corot in the Mesdag Museum (No. 65). Constable, of course, had not the extraordinary lightness of touch, with which the gigantic rocks are utilised here, nor the boldness of the point of sight, which Corot took very far down, to make the stony mass more effective, nor the play of fancy, which makes the whole picture look like an illustration for a poem. A certain affinity of conception with Constable is more obvious in later studies, such

* "L'Œuvre de Corot," No. 257; painted in 1832.

as that of the house mentioned above, which recalls the famous Constable sketch, *A Deserted Mill*, among others.

As Corot grew older, his brush became broader. It was but rarely that he applied this vigourous colouristic painting to large canvases. He reserved it for his little surprises in the manner of the Thomy Thiéry examples. For larger pictures, he considered only his rhymed poetry sufficiently dignified, and in these the handling is always subordinated more to tone than to contrast. Thus, throughout his life we find the dualism we noted at the beginning. His nymphs and baigneuses beautify and inspire the classicism, to which he paid tribute in his youth with the *Hagar;* the little landscapes show the more intimate Corot, who, in Rome, could not persuade himself to enter any museum but that of Nature. The one gave to the other, it was the same man and yet I could scarcely name a single picture, in which both sides are perfectly combined. This dualism is the best refutation of a charge of deliberate mannerism, for mannerism is always one-sided, and tries in vain to conceal its weakness beneath variety of subject. It is true that Corot painted many pictures in which, if we compare them with his finest works, we cannot now recognise the creative necessity. He worked with no consciousness of doing anything remarkable. His art was his natural form of expression, and afforded him the satisfactory possibility of conversing with himself and with his fellow men. It was his habit to repeat in ten pictures what he had said in one, but we cannot say that the one might have been a more concentrated work of its kind. This multiplicity must not be made a reproach to the master, for it did not prevent his steady progress. He who is master of several creative processes cannot become one-sided. We can easily perceive that the various methods—the broad touch and the strong colour on the one hand, the tonal painting with little dots on the other—were applied according to the design, according to the impression he had received and wished to communicate. Naked nixies and peasants required a different atmosphere. The hymn to woman had always a secret separate shrine in Corot's work and in his heart.

In his old age, when he was long past sixty, this affection brought about a new departure in his work. If woman in landscape had sometimes snapped her fingers at him, now, in these works of his latest period, where she asserts herself alone, we shall find the master on a rare—I had almost said, a unique—eminence.

Corot painted over two-and-a-half thousand pictures. I have tried to indicate the various manners by which they may be classified. We have noted in passing landscapes, portraits, idyls, romantic compositions, Odalisques, bathing nymphs, church-pictures, frescoes, and then again landscapes—a whole art-history! And when we might suppose we had come to the end of the list, we find an array of pictures with new characteristics, which make up yet another category. Woman plays her part again in these, in settings chosen from among all the earlier manners, but these women stand out sharply from the others. They are sufficiently differentiated by the fact that they *are* women. Looking at them, we cannot recall that Corot ever gave us any feminine types before but his merry little nude maidens. These others are grave and silent, and we have forgotten that Corot was once grave and silent. They are still young, but they were not painted for their youth; even in the most girlish among them there is something of the matronly grace of the famous *Mandoline-player*, formerly in the Desfossés collection. Sometimes they are in the open air, fetching water from the spring, as in the beautiful picture of the

VERMEER OF DELFT: THE SOLDIER AND THE LAUGHING GIRL

MRS. SAMUEL JOSEPH'S COLLECTION, LONDON

FROM AN ETCHING BY JACQUEMART

Behrens collection at Hamburg; always alone, lost in thought, or resting dreamily on the same panther-skin on which others—or perhaps they themselves—once sunned their naked limbs. Or again, we find women with their children in a lonely landscape.

There is a totally different tone in these idyls. They seem to have none of the Greek feeling of earlier times. Now and again, indeed, we find a Greek—no dancing nymph, but a wounded Eurydice.

Now, for the first time, we find woman in the house. Heretofore, it seemed as if she could only flourish between trees, on the margin of pools among the dewy grass. Now we see young girls in quiet, cosy rooms. They hold books in their hands which they do not read, or they have crept in and seated themselves before the master's easel with a guitar which they do not play.

They are rather Dutch than Greek. The airy draperies of the Elysian Fields have become the neat dress of the bourgeoise. The technique harmonises therewith. We are far from the misty envelope of the nymphs. The figures stand out in rich tints from the solid walls of modern rooms. The art of atmosphere fascinates us here, as before, but it has to reckon with the colourist. Clear harmonies illuminate these pictures. They reflect the meditative calm of these people and of their creator.

Here at last the direct influence of that land which was discovered by the painters of Barbizon stands revealed. But even here Corot assimilates Holland in a manner of his own, and not as did the series of painters from Daubigny to Rousseau. He still keeps all that French tradition had given him, and enriches his synthesis only with the most precious elements. The others learned from Ruysdael and his circle. Corot went to the two who, with Hals, stand for the greatest among the Dutch masters—Rembrandt and Vermeer.

Corot's instinctive sympathy with Rembrandt is traceable through his entire work, and it shows how freely we must conceive of classicism, if we would understand such community. It helped him to a looser form. In his *St. Sebastian* there is something of Rembrandt's *Scourging of Christ* in the Carstanjen collection, and since the appearance of Rembrandt's remarkable idyl, the *Diana and Actæon* of the Salm-Salm collection,* at the Düsseldorf Exhibition, we might almost say there was a certain affinity even in this field. Corot is always daintier, not only in form and dimension, but also in the invention of methods. But the little seated woman in the studio of the Rouart collection and Madame Desfossés' gloomy *Passeur* are thoroughly Rembrandtesque. In the little Rouart picture, Corot, by a marvellous gradation of gray tones, achieves in small a majesty of effect akin to that we see in greater splendour in Rembrandt's *Delilah* or *Esther's Feast*, and, in a less spectral fashion, in certain portraits such as the Duke of Westminster's *Lady with the Fan*. This last Corot saw during his visit to London in 1862.

Eight years earlier he had been in Holland and Belgium with Dutilleux. According to the notes of this journey made by his friend, he was not much impressed by the *Anatomy Lesson* and the *Night Watch*, but he admired the *Syndics*, and, though we hear nothing of this, the Dutch painters of interiors must certainly have appealed to him. For shortly after his return he painted the two remarkable pictures which stand alone in the work of the fifties, the *Kitchen at Martes* and the *Interior at Mas-Bilier*.†

* Bode's "Rembrandt," Plate 196.

† "L'Œuvre de Corot," Nos. 824 and 826. Corot had never painted interiors before.

The intimacy so characteristic of his landscapes, takes on a new charm in this typically Dutch genre. How differently people and things exist in Corot's rooms, and in the agreeably painted interiors of Pieter de Hoogh! The Dutch fashion-painter, with his pleasant colour and clean handling, gives us a picture of the utmost amenity. Even the light is only there to furnish the room. Corot makes the room out of colour, the atmosphere out of light, and out of the whole a bit of life at which we seem to be looking unobserved.

To this art, which he thus essayed by chance, he returned later with great mastery, when advancing age had made the comfort of interiors more material to him. Forms he formerly bathed in morning and evening twilight, building them up of a hundred floating, lurking, interwoven specks and touches, now stood out in strong relief as large single figures surrounded by the light of a room, demanding all the skill of a firm brush and strong colour. It is astonishing that a septuagenarian should have had the vigour for this, the hardest task he had set himself, after the immense and varied labours of his past life. The first single figures in this manner coincide more or less with the two interiors. They were studies of Neapolitan models, akin to the first Roman pictures of women, but infinitely riper and bolder. M. Cheramy has an Italian woman * in which Corot's whole palette is applied: the black and white in the hair and head-cloth, the pale yellow with the violet-gray shadows in the complexion, the red in the back of the bodice and the striped apron, the violet-brown in the sleeves, and, above all, the strong blue in the skirt; the same blue he afterwards made into a veritable triumph of colour. The Italian sits on the ground in a very natural attitude, one arm on her jar, her hands and feet carelessly crossed. The colours have something of the same naturalness. They belong to the dress as evidently as the dress to the wearer; a highly subtle degradation of tones harmonises the contrasts. This degradation becomes ever more masterly, and allows of an increase in dimensions and expression. In Durand-Ruel's somewhat later *Femme à la Pensée* † we already note the tapestry-like effect which gives a beautiful warmth to many of Corot's single figures. In this class of pictures again, the older Corot became, the more did he make brushing and colour play the part formerly assigned to his all-enveloping tone. This will be best appreciated by a comparison of the six portraits of the woman before the easel.‡ They began about 1865, and ended with the lady in the black velvet dress of the Lyons Museum, painted in 1870. In the earlier examples Corot seems more preoccupied with the pure contour, with the beautiful apparition in the room, which he renders in blond tones, cool and gentle. Madame Esnault-Pelterie's picture, with the exquisite rose-colour of the dress, is a masterly paraphrase of the Dutch painters of interiors, but softer, freer, and more fluid than the genre-pictures painted by the specialists of the seventeenth century. In the Lyons version, on the other hand, he, like Rembrandt, penetrates more deeply into the art of painting; divides what was formerly kept together, even at the expense of the modelling, shows himself architect rather than decorator, and creates a wholly modern work. It is no isolated phenomenon. In many pictures of the same period, that look like portraits and were painted from models, we find the same painting. Durand Ruel had one of the finest, a threequarters length of a girl, indescribably expressive, called *La jeune Grecque*.§ It is as simple and transparent as Rembrandt's young girl in the Stockholm Gallery, and one might almost add, as

* "L'Œuvre de Corot," No. 1037.
† *Ibid.* No. 1041.
‡ *Ibid.* Nos. 1557–1561.
§ *Ibid.* No. 1995.

COROT: THE STUDIO

ESNAULT-PELTERIE COLLECTION, PARIS

instinct with an incomprehensible mastery. Rembrandt touched the face and hands more broadly and used stronger colour. But one is inclined to attribute this difference not so much to superiority of powers as to a difference of temperament, which was, of course, irreducible. The little Emma Dobigny, the model for this picture, represents Corot's type as perfectly as Hendrickje Stoffels, or the so-called Cook represents that of Rembrandt. We divine in it the master's mental attitude, nay, his conception of life. No philosophy, but incarnate and complete forms of sensation. In this picture, and in many others, Corot showed the contemplative strain in woman, which does not complete itself in thought, but remains in the senses—dreams without any firm basis. Women, and especially Southern women, are excellent models for painters and sculptors, because their whole nature is expressed in form. They think, live, and create forms, and are untouched by the intellectuality which draws man inwards and saddens his external aspect. Their being is still animal, and as they cultivate this animalism with their instincts, and not with those of man, they avoid the ugly features of our hidden, uncultured animalism. Corot's maiden is supreme Nature. No breath of sentimentality or anecdote disturbs the purity of the conception. The picture seems a reflection in a magic mirror into which the girl—and not the artist—is looking. Rembrandt's little damsel at the window in the Stockholm Gallery is meditative also. But she betrays, involuntarily, all the natural racial energy, which does not sleep, even when it is not required. She is always alert, always listening for sounds from without. Here the dream is woven of more definite thoughts. Rembrandt's art suggests this just as Corot's painting reveals the nature of his model. Emma Dobigny was a typical Parisienne, and yet *La jeune Grecque* is a very apt title for the picture. The conception is Greek, in a higher sense even than Corot's mythic fancies inspired by the Greek world. And it is this which marks the difference between Corot and the great Dutchman. The elements that tempt us to draw comparisons are the analogies of development, the transition in both instances from tone to colour, from the husk to the kernel. Only one of the many skins with which we may conceive the personality of a great artist to be overlaid, shows Corot's affinity to Rembrandt. Beneath it there is always the painter who went to Rome to study landscape. No matter how many of such skins we might discover, the core would always be the Greek feeling. And this is also the reason why, before these, the maturest of Corot's creations, our memories hover between Rembrandt and another master, superficially as sharply opposed to the Dutchman as possible—Ingres. But we shall travel further still. We shall find that a deeper comprehension of Corot's rich development will lead us back, if not to Rembrandt, at least to his immediate neighbourhood.

And it is not Ingres the creator of Odalisques, not Ingres the painter, but rather, the draughtsman Ingres, who achieved his greatest results by his most restricted vehicles, who also set his faces before us like inspirations created by a breath, purely human, and yet stripped of all human impedimenta. We find the same mysterious plastic treatment in Corot's female faces. The *Jeune Grecque* is just such a young girl as we might see any day, a good-humoured dreamy little being, with a certain drollery in her gravity. But, in spite of all our easy insight into this personality, an invisible power beguiles us to get more out of the face. Nothing psychological or poetical ; however much we might read into it on these lines, the really remarkable element would remain unperceived, if we were blind to the presence of a second face. We feel something like this as we look :

out of the profile a second seems to grow, or rather, to hover before the other in barely perceptible curves, a profile that has nothing human about it, but is a symbol, a circle, an ellipse in space, a spherical something. This evocation, a perfectly regular form, which we might suppose ourselves capable of defining by a simple word, remains enigmatic, because, although perceptible, it exists only in the imagination, and is formed, quite involuntarily, by the eyes, nose, hair, and mouth of a girl who is looking at us. The spherical substitution of an abstract form for a natural one, to which the artist compels us, is his art, and never did Corot bring it to richer and fuller effect than in these pictures. The *Femme à la Perle** is a pendant to the *Jeune Grecque*, and is perhaps more mysterious, less simple. Here we divine the artist's conscious achievement of a form which, for simplicity's sake, we will call the antique. The constructive element of the symbol appears in direct relation with the organic element of Nature. When we begin to examine the details, we recognise the bridges over which we have passed. We see that the curve from eye to forehead could not be like this in reality, that the nose in the portrait is very different to the elevation between mouth and eyes in Nature, and yet, when we attempt to grasp the difference, we remain spell-bound by the plausible presentment. And now, too, we understand Corot's greater richness as compared with Ingres. The necessary recoil of contemplation in the reproduction of Nature as such is stronger with Corot. With Ingres we are more easily detained by the arabesque, especially in the Odalisque pictures. The beauty of these is above all praise, and is not called in question here. We have to analyse our sensation in order to recognise what lies beyond the narrowly enclosed sphere of Ingres' art. We soon perceive that the sharp classic contour softens, when we turn to Ingres' portraits, and that the whole proportion changes when we turn from the painter to the draughtsman. Ingres' drawings are of the utmost value, because in them form goes into material without a remainder. All the limitations of the painter disappear. The natural reduction of the palette to the gray and white of pencil and paper leaves no remainder. With the painter Ingres we receive a very precise form, but not to the same extent the double impression from symbol and from Nature that strains our higher powers of interpretation to the uttermost. The painter of *La Femme à la Perle*, on the other hand, gives strength to this impulse. Roughly speaking, his effect upon us is double that of the other, though, of course, he does not achieve twice the specific effect of Ingres. The beauty of the *Femme à la Perle* does not lie wholly in the full oval of the face, in the exquisitely modelled attitude, the symmetry of the folded hands, and the effect of this beautifully shaped mass against the background, but also in the bloom of the flesh, overlaid by a drapery of magnificent colours, and, above all, in the fact that the whole form is woven of a texture which brings the different parts together no less effectually than an arabesque.

Recognition of this superiority is not the result of a reaction in taste. This has nothing to do with the present question. The laws of taste, always sublimely observed by Ingres, can only meet relative requirements. Corot achieved more by a deeper insight into the possibilities of his material, an insight which influences our criticism automatically, because the results of this insight have become familiar to us in the history of development. Hence it is that we feel something to be lacking even in our perfect appreciation of a work by Ingres, and we see that Corot gets a finer result. He makes a more exhaustive use of his material.

* "L'Œuvre de Corot," No. 1507 (1868–1870).

This appreciation would be unjust, if Corot's material had been essentially different, if, for instance, he had painted like Manet, who aimed at the suppression of modelling. But this was not the case. Corot's pictures of women have extraordinary plasticity. It is this alone which brings us to Ingres, just as Ingres brought Corot to it. He has this plasticity and something more; he multiplies possibilities, not by increasing the plastic effect, but by a richer fulfilment of the purpose served by plasticity. He does this more effectually than Ingres. We have more parts to bring together in Corot's pictures. The efforts of our fancy, the levers of enjoyment, are greater, and not the less secure. Indeed, they are more secure, for there is less demand upon our sense of verisimilitude with Corot, because the mediums of effect are more numerous. We enjoy a combination of the plastic antique ideal, which predominates in Ingres, with the ideal of planes as conceived by Rembrandt. Ingres' absolute negation of the Rembrandtesque ideal was not a defect in his style. He gave tone to his planes with unerring precision. Nothing could be more perverse than to call him a bad colourist in this sense. Corot, however, achieves the same relative purity within his means, and more perfectly by these means, for he does not only tint, he paints.

The Rembrandtesque quality of Corot's later manner manifests itself only in a few aspects of his works. But there is an artist whose relation to the creator of the *Syndics* finds its parallel in that of Corot to the master—Vermeer. And this parallel throws a new light on some important characteristics of Corot.

It is rare, indeed, to find so many points of contact between two artists of such different races and periods. Even the landscape painter, Vermeer, travelled on paths distinctly akin to those of Corot at certain times. The street in the Six Collection, and the superb *View of Delft* in the Hague Gallery reveal an artistic conception divided by no impassable abyss from that of Corot the colourist. Vermeer, is, no doubt, more precise. His sparkling dots are more neatly distributed, his contrasts are set side by side like the houses in his town views, his brush never strays suddenly over the whole surface of the picture, but divides it accurately. But beneath this precision, which is, indeed, a characteristic of his school, we seem to divine just such another child-like temperament, quietly fashioning a world for himself. He does not penetrate into the depths, like Rembrandt, does not become great with the final consequence of a powerful drama, but decks himself with the delicate gradations of a gently emotional soul, and compels us with the tenderness of his demands upon our admiration. We adore the daintiness of Vermeer. He was one of the most aristocratic painters of his time. His subtle sense of unusual effects of the most delicate kind and his inventive genius preserved him from mannerism. But Vermeer claims our respect further, in that this wisdom never made him pretentious, that he evinced his faculty of producing new effects in art almost playfully, with an elegance that scorned insistence, with the simplicity of the poet. And this brings nearer to our parallel. We also find affinities in the experimental use of creative methods. We must not, of course, over-estimate these elements, as far as they refer to the landscape-painter Vermeer. The little figures in the entrances of the houses in the Six Collection, or the luminous black and white personages on the salmon-coloured banks of the Delft canal have come down to posterity not alone in Corot's pictures. The whole of modern painting, beginning with Constable, must look to Vermeer as its prototype, and Signac was wrong not to trace the history of his group back to this, the most deliberate colour-divisionist of the old masters.

The affinities between the pictures of women by the two painters is much closer, especially if we take Corot's latest period. In these we may note a remarkable unanimity of temperament in the most subtle inflections. The girl's profile in the Arenberg Gallery at Brussels, and still more, the magnificent head in the Hague Gallery, show the same almost mysterious combination of accomplished modelling and all the charms of painting. Such plastic purity was never achieved, far less surpassed, by any other Dutchman. That which Ingres painted with the pencil, the vapourous, rounded fulness, is perfectly preserved, and intoxicating colours play in the vapour, and the multiplication of the charm of colour seems to make the immaterial still more delicate. Our knowledge of racial characteristics is considerably enlarged hereby, for I do not know what should prevent us from describing Vermeer's profile as classical in the most liberal sense, as classical as the girlish head in the Berlin Gallery, painted 200 years earlier by Petrus Christus, one of the ancestral pictures of the whole series. Vermeer's maiden would make just as good a young Greek as Corot's model. As with the *Femme à la Perle*, it is not the accidental cast of the model's features—in this case she was called Bertha Goldschmidt, and so was probably of Germanic origin—which is decisive, but rather the modification of the artist; and in the two girlish heads at Brussels and the Hague, and in the *Dentellière* of the Louvre, the charm lies in the second face which Vermeer created out of his model. But both artists preserved the essentially national type in the most exquisite fashion. We see, not a restoration of a Greek statue, but a Dutchwoman and a Frenchwoman, whose very social position we can divine. Vermeer's greater severity of form makes this less evident at a first glance, he comes closer to Ingres than does Corot. But he, too, preludes with the frankly natural origin of the figure—most apparent in the Louvre *Lace-maker*—and thus ensures the solid basis of the effect. His Dutchwoman is certainly very different to Hendrickje Stoffels, but still she is a true Dutchwoman; the bony structure of the face may be seen in coarser outline every day in the street. Nevertheless, a higher form flows from the oval, which seems to us no less Greek than Corot's female figures. The very unusual cracks in the two Vermeers at Brussels and the Hague make it impossible to follow the actual painting very closely. But the main points may be observed in the well-hung head in the Hague Museum. The colour-effect lies in the beautiful contrast of blue and yellow, the favourite colours of both artists, and the reciprocal interpenetration of these colours, by which impure mixtures are avoided. The yellow of the head-cloth is intensified in the jacket, and so threaded with blue tones, that it inclines to olive. In the face, the darker yellow shades to pink. This pink is marvellously gradated in the lips, and increases towards the inside of the mouth. The stronger shade is applied in flecks upon the lighter, and thus preserves a distinct series of gradations. The method is more cautious, I had almost said, more appetising than Corot's, but very similar in principle and even in the manner of laying on the paint. The mixture of very thin painting with economically distributed and heavily loaded passages is characteristic of both painters. The thick white impasto in the iris of the eye, the fashioning of the ear-ring; the concentration of the heightened colours on the more subdued tone, so that the sparkling point crowns the tone; the heightening of the yellow in the pendant piece of the head-cloth by the loaded touch in the lighter shades, and finally, the broad white strip of collar—these are all effects for which we may find parallels in a simplified form in Corot. The peculiar, comparatively less shadowed form of

VERMEER OF DELFT: HEAD OF A GIRL

HAGUE MUSEUM

Vermeer remains. But we have only to remember the warmth of his faces in other pictures, as in the milkmaid of the Six Collection, or the lady reading a letter in the Dresden Gallery, to find further evidence of the affinity. For Vermeer's manner of veiling the faces in his warmer pictures, is one of his most masterly gifts. It distinguishes him sharply from Pieter de Hoogh and Terborch, who sometimes make strenuous attempts to achieve the same effects, and who fail to reach his level, even in their most brilliant works, because the effort is too evident. Vermeer understood the necessity for sacrifice, and did not disturb the general tone of the flesh by many colours, but he made his carnations vibrate under his quivering brush. Corot's method was the same, and in the *Jeune Grecque* he emphasised this granular effect as he had learnt to do many years earlier in *La Toilette*.

All these affinities must not be taken as literally as it is necessary to state them here for the sake of clarity. But the agreement of the two masters in many of their sentiments may be accepted literally enough. In a consideration of methods, the history of development sets its veto upon all narrow comparisons. We must not overlook the evolution of the manual process. In the interval from Vermeer to Corot, the handwriting has become more elaborate. Corot is not so precise in the differentiation of tone and contrast; he allows himself more freedom, and creates a fragmentary form for himself, to enable him to keep pace with the swiftness of his invention. But this relatively careless technique nevertheless derives to a certain extent from Vermeer. I may indicate the process of evolution by saying that Corot, working in the same dimensions, strengthened all the mediums of effect, and consequently had to sacrifice many other factors present in Vermeer. Where, for instance, Vermeer built up a complicated groundwork, and finally drew the essential effect over the whole like a magic veil, Corot kept the final result in view throughout, and from the first ensured the effect of details which finally decide the character of the whole.

In the beautiful picture of the London National Gallery, we may, I think, see the prototype of the *Femme à la Perle*. Vermeer surpasses himself here in the splendour of his modelling, as does Corot in his portrait. In the forehead, which in both cases gives the typical ornament to the face, we note a very similar adornment. Corot's charming fancy of the pendant pearl on the forehead, by means of which he strikes a symbolic note that echoes throughout the figure, might even be referred to Vermeer, and to the peculiar effect of his ear-rings, &c. It is very probable that Corot saw and studied the London picture, which belonged to Bürger in his time.

But this recognition of a single conscious inspiration does not exhaust the curious depth of the affinity. Corot had always a great deal of personal wealth to add to impulses from without; he was too original to give himself up to a single prepossession, and we could hardly pronounce his last years the supreme period of his achievement if the fundamental qualities of his manner had suffered eclipse. Among these we have already noted, as an early peculiarity, Corot's manner of receiving Dutch influences through a French medium. Here again this was the case. It is certain that he had seen Vermeer's works, and the Delft master may have been to him what Hobbema was to the Barbizon painters; but once more he profited from the preparation of the influence by a French master of the eighteenth century.

Not all, but much of the importance proper to Vermeer in the Dutch school

is ascribed in the French school to Chardin, the master of interiors and still-life. He, too, looked at the Dutchmen—not only those as whose imitator he was long honoured in France—and continued them. Corot's relation to a master two hundred years earlier than himself required careful examination, because certain creative impulses necessarily undergo modification in process of time, and obscure the likeness. The hundred years less in the case of Chardin are favourable to our examination, because they entail less change in the creative impulse. If we trace the evolution back to Petrus Cristus, then the two hundred years between Vermeer and his ancestor would have the same significance as the like term between the Delft master and his descendant. Chardin's relation to Holland is obvious to all, because his subjects coincide with the favourite motives of the old Dutch masters. If we examine the relation more closely, the impression of a very close affinity disappears, save in so far as it rests on a pure question of material. We begin to seek out the Dutchmen, who really shared Chardin's idiosyncrasy, and finally, very little of the similarity remains. It is only from the very best of the seventeenth-century still-life painters that the road leads to the French master's fruit-pieces. Kalf's pendant lemon-peel in the Berlin Museum shows one of the stages. Among the very unequal works of Van Beyeren, there are one or two notable pictures, as, for instance, the Hague still-life of the platter with the pieces of fish, rendered by luminous white touches of paint on a gray-white ground. The indications are more clearly recognisable in the finest of all Van Beyerens, that of the hare, the chicken, and the red giblets, lately added to the Hague Museum. Such things remind us of Chardin. But much as he obviously owes to his predecessors, he is decidedly greater. Not only because the equanimity of perfection was natural to him, and he never succumbed to the temptations of mannerism, but because his style as such is more important. He, in his playful moments, masters what the others only achieve in their best works, and does so by surer methods. Chardin's *Hare* at Stockholm is simpler, and almost monumental in effect as compared with the works of the Dutchmen, and yet the elements of the effect are multiplied. The single little apple in the Hare picture makes a richer and stronger effect than a whole picture by Kalf. On the other hand, Chardin's level of excellence brings him near to the master who also painted still-life occasionally, though the still-life painters are not to be named in the same breath with him, the Vermeer of the *Reading Girl* in the Dresden Gallery, who ornamented the foreground of this gem with a plate of fruit, painted in a glowing olive tone, which contains the whole essence of the picture. In addition to this seductive glow of colour, which is obtained not by contrast, but by handling, and is likewise to be found in Chardin, we note yet another characteristic common to both. The monumental gravity of the Dresden interior is not comparable to anything in Chardin. But Vermeer had another manner beside that of the Dresden picture and of the girl in the fur-trimmed jacket in the Berlin Museum; he painted a few interiors, in which his seriousness was not directed to the purity of an unparalleled harmony of forms, but called forth a second quality in the master, which we have already noted. I mean the works in which his daintiness is applied to a rendering of woman more akin to his landscapes, such as the piquant little picture in the Rijks Museum, the mandoline player with the amazingly lifelike servant-maid, or the large *Allegory* at the Hague. Here Vermeer plies his brilliant tonal art more as a decorator, adorns the background therewith, and sets his women in his rich-toned interiors with superb assurance. The baroque element in the *Allegory*, already evinced by the gesture

with which the woman sets her foot upon the globe, is the vehicle of this change of technique. Here, and in the picture of the two women in the Rijks Museum, the master was not deterred from the contrasts he desired by a certain necessary hardness, and here again we find the effect won by little flashing dots, as in the landscapes. With this technique the landscape painter foreshadows that of Canaletto, which, indeed, merely generalised and coarsened the style; the painter of interiors heralds Chardin, and was continued by him in a sublime manner. In Chardin's homely scenes of domestic life there is the same softness of perfect gradation combined with freshness of contrast. It is not so much his conception of colour as his relatively granulated touch, at a time when most of his contemporaries showed an increasing preference for the brisk, decorative stroke, which connects Chardin with Vermeer.

"His manner of painting is peculiar," wrote Bachaumont of Chardin. "He puts one colour beside the other, almost without mixing them, so that his work has a certain resemblance to mosaic or inlaying, like the needlework known as point carré. And Gaston Schéfer, who quotes this contemporary criticism, adds: "Chardin was, it appears, a kind of pointilliste. When we examine his pictures closely they seem mere indications. But when we step back, everything clears up, becomes distinct and flows together in a marvellous harmony." *

This seemed a peculiar method of working in Diderot's time, but it was no longer so regarded in the days of the aged Corot, when this pointillisme had already found adherents of various styles. And if Diderot and his contemporaries had not forgotten Vermeer in favour of the then absurdly over-rated Teniers, they might have discovered this pointillisme a hundred years earlier in the Delft master. Chardin always reveals the eighteenth century, but the Dutchman subdues and intensifies his manner. He shows the Dutch spirit in the reduction of the space in his interiors, by which he gains a greater concentration of the effect, by making his women middle-class housewives, and none the less charming. Life in his delicious doll's houses is daintier than in the Dutch rooms, lighter, more cheerful, more graceful, but there is in them a breath of the same intensity that endears the Dutch interiors to us. The Dutchman again combines the gentleness of a highly refined conception with a delight in bold accents. In Chardin we see the eighteenth century, reminiscent of the glorious past, in Vermeer a beauty instinct with all the charms of the seventeenth century is rejuvenated by its relation to the following epoch.

Corot has something of each. He accomplishes that which all the masters of the nineteenth century accomplish, forming a link in a chain of development that had extended as far as himself, and at the same time harking back to the seventeenth century as did Delacroix, Courbet, Manet and many others. But the eighteenth century was not so cavalierly treated by him as by others, who cast but a glance at Watteau and Fragonard in passing. Chardin and Vermeer put together do not make up Corot. But the mind which has grasped these two will look upon Corot as an almost necessary complement.

Whenever I see in the Louvre the pastels, and the famous old head with the horn spectacles, the portrait of Chardin by himself when he was nearly eighty years old, I am reminded of le Père Corot. It is the same type, the same indomitable good-nature, almost the same shrewd bourgeois face. Although a century divides them, they seem nearer to each other than Corot and the generation that came after

* "Les Grands Artistes. Chardin." Paris, Laurens, no date.

him. And nearer, fundamentally, than Corot and Vermeer. It is true that many of Corot's single figures seem to have more in common with Vermeer's serious women than with Chardin's little housewives. But the nuance that is opposed to the parallel Vermeer—Corot, is just what the master of Ville d'Avray shares with Chardin, the light and fluid quality of the form, I had almost said, of the manner of life. Corot's relations to his compatriot are the reverse of those between Chardin and Vermeer. He kept the doll's house element out of his interiors—*his* dolls were reserved for his silver-gray woods—increased the dimensions, paid far more attention to persons than to their surroundings, and lavished on his figures all the wealth which Chardin indicates by the scattered details of his delicious world. We can judge how serious we have become, from the old age of the most cheerful spirit of our times, if we compare him with the most serious of the eighteenth century.

And yet the likeness in the two portraits is not deceptive. A last shimmer of the golden time that refused to look at the reverse of life survives in the aged Corot. That which makes his latest figures seem more serious than the earlier ones, is the enrichment of the artist's effects, quite as much as the natural propensity of the mature to profounder meditation.

Thus the ring closes. All three strove after the same quiet beauty. Each belongs to his century and yet extends beyond it, and in this portion with which he belongs not to his age, but to eternity, he comes in contact with the others. Thus the Dresden rhapsody in olive, Chardin's *Benedicite*, and the last of Corot's women seated before an easel, belong together. The three painters seem even more closely related, if, turning aside from individual pictures, we take account only of what, in each of the three, appears to us as form in the widest sense, as individual organ, as soul.

The similarity is no mere verbal one ; if it were so, it would be possible to dispense with one of the three. They are related, if we stand back so far from them, that the lands and times in which they lived appear as enclosed masses, leaving their silhouettes the more clearly visible and laying bare all the incidental elements with which the passing hour endowed them. Among these incidentals I should reckon the accidental resemblances in the methods of painting of various artists. Yet he who comprehends art in the widest sense will find, that such affinities are not purely fortuitous, in the case of great masters. If we penetrate deeply into the being of these three artists of three rich artistic periods which we have grouped together, we shall find more and more, that the manner of their painting corresponded most intimately with their humanity, and that any attempt to consider their technique apart from their personality, is inconclusive. And this shows us, that the relations between the three are not accidental, but arise out of the circumstance that three men who were alike—as far as such likeness is compatible with the different times in which they lived—determined to be true to their nature in dealing with their art.

When the future measures us of this generation from afar, it will perhaps think it desirable to revise the favourable judgments accorded by us to certain artists. It will deal most hardly with those whose relation to others seems accidental. It is hardly conceivable that any age will attack the Corot whose spirit mates with those of Vermeer and Chardin. As long as one of the trio is honoured, the other two will seem indispensable.

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COROT: THE LADY IN BLUE (LA DAME BLEUE) 1874

H. ROUART COLLECTION, PARIS

But we do not need to discern all these latent affinities in order to love Corot He appeals to the amateur more readily than any great artist of the nineteenth century. The layman, who stands before many contemporaries as before so many enigmas, is charmed into praise of the beautiful before Corot ; so much of the old and familiar seems to be in him, so natural does his novelty appear to us. Corot's own emotion is so apparent in his pictures that we need but be susceptible of emotion ourselves to become his admirers.

The development of his latest and strongest period was only arrested by death. His colour increased in beauty with every picture. The *Dame Bleue** in M. Henri Rouart's collection—a perfect parure in blue, the richness of which depends more upon the vehement brushing than upon variety of tones—and the *Monk Playing the Violoncello*† in Madam Amsinck's collection at Hamburg, both painted in 1874, when Corot was nearly eighty, show the same audacity of colour.

It is not only the breadth of the painting, appealing as this does to our modern taste, but the wide humanity of his later works which makes me call Corot's last years his happiest period. He was always sincere, even when he trifled. But here he appears a great man, putting away childish things, and willing to sacrifice everything in order to win the highest results from the lavish gifts of his genius. If some of his earlier works are dimmed by a breath of compromise, the best pictures of his last period are the manifestations of a soul conscious of having to render account to his Maker alone.

If we set aside the many works which recur in every period and are merely modified reproductions of earlier conceptions, if we confine ourselves to what was, for the moment, new in his production, his progressive approximation to the ideals of modern painting is unmistakable. And yet we shall never reckon Corot altogether a modern ; his creative form has no cogent relation to the Impressionists. He went part of the way with them, but his eyes were always fixed on things which had long vanished from their ken.

Corot was a dreamer. He had not the temperament of the great conquerors, whose pictures take the world by storm. It may be for this reason that his influence was confined to a narrow circle. Its benefits are less obvious than those which Ingres and Delacroix conferred on their successors. Corot was not explicit enough, he was too unconscious of his own abundance, to be the leader of a school in the narrower sense. The things smaller men such as Lépine built up on his foundations are negligible. Yet in some of the most important artists of the age we find echoes of his spirit. Not in Manet ; he knew that Corot did not understand him, and stood apart from him, almost at an opposite pole. But the other Impressionists owe not a little to this tacit master. His warm tonality was of great service to them at their début. Pissarro owes him most, then Monet, Sisley, and others. The first landscapes of the new school owed their peculiar softness to Corot's lyricism. During the conquest of light, thoughts went back to the master of twilight. Since painters have begun to deal calmly with this victory Corot's spirit has waxed prolific. Something of the great idyllist lives again in Bonnard. Whereas Maurice Denis approaches Ingres' successors, Bonnard manifests the higher classicism, with which he surpasses his companion as surely as did Corot the painter of the Odalisques.

Among contemporary Germans, Waldmüller was the first to appreciate Corot, though we find no direct traces of his enthusiastic admiration in his works. The

* "L'Œuvre de Corot," No. 2180. † *Ibid.* No. 2129.

Frankfort group (Burnitz, Eysen, V. Müller, &c.) reveal the beneficent influence of the master. Corot delivered the youthful Böcklin from Schirmer's dryness.

The French public has a boundless adoration for Corot. His popularity has even put Millet into the shade. Material appreciation of his pictures exceeds all reasonable measure. He is the only landscape painter of the great generation whose works show a steady increase in price. Pictures Corot painted for 1000 francs in his last years command a hundredfold to-day. This is no result of the fickle preference of amateurs; it is due to a sounder instinct. Corot was unique. When he died, it was not only the creator of glorious works who was buried, but a style. He is behind us, and we may not look to the future for his equal. For, with all his versatility, in spite of his far-reaching affinities with the most pre-eminent spirits, we must admit that Corot did not deal exhaustively with his age. He was not deeply rooted in the present like Constable and Menzel; he had not the astounding grasp of a new synthesis shown by Courbet; he was not so necessary as Monet. The audacity of a Renoir was denied him. His art was like a smiling, well-protected coast, on which the waves ripple gently and never break in fury. Our glowing passion turns rather to the great solitaries, rocky islands warring against hostile elements. We feel more enthusiasm for these because they rise from depths in which we fear to sink, because they accomplish that for which our souls yearn. Yet who, trembling before all the novel forces raging around, would not sometimes gladly linger in the quiet meadows which Corot has preserved for the softer emotions that remain to us?

MILLET: THE SOUP (LA SOUPE) (SALON 1871)

MARSEILLE MUSEUM

JEAN FRANÇOIS MILLET

Theophile Silvestre tells us of a description Corot gave him of his early manner of drawing. He began by drawing details of persons or groups that took his fancy in the street. But as folks were not so obliging as to stand still till he had finished, his sketch-book was full of half heads and fragmentary noses. He then determined never to come home without a finished head, and set to work to fix the general aspect of his groups in hasty outline drawings. If details escaped him, he managed to suggest the character of the whole.

The whole of modern art has adopted this receipt, which was also that of Rembrandt, Rubens, and Velazquez, and became genius in the hands of Daumier. Millet made it an element of style.

It is difficult to estimate the extent of Millet's indebtedness to Daumier. His biographers either suppress the fact altogether, or slur it over in a passing phrase. They either do not see it, or they wish to be discreet. Art history is to them a history of individuals, each of which must have invented everything. At bottom it is merely the pettiness of the biographer who belittles greatness by over-estimating. As if it detracted from the sum of achievement we call Delacroix, to admit that the things we call Géricault contain greater elements! The research of the art-historian should concern itself with a state of being in which the individual disappears and works endure. It may thus give living artists hints for their personal edification, notably, examples of the golden fact that there always have been and always will be spiritual relationships. The biographers who avoid such researches are always those who accumulate anecdotes concerning the lives of their heroes. In this way it is almost inevitable that they should at last declare, that everything has already existed, and this discovery may lead them to that abhorrence of all art which one has to regret nowadays in so many intelligent persons, who seem to have lost all their enthusiasms.

But we who seek for art, will find our love of art strengthened by recognition of the profound relation of great creations one to another. Reminiscences of Daumier will not minimise our enjoyment of Millet, but on the contrary, will give it a depth that will preserve us more especially from seeing in Millet a sentimental peasant, a point of view that has received a good deal of support from the kind of cult lavished on the sentiment of the *Angelus*. Millet is a very much simpler artist than Daumier, who was in every way a more richly artistic personality, and to whom it would have been impossible to have imposed upon himself a simplification of pictorial means for a higher purpose such as that entailed by Millet's Nature. For this reason, the painter of Don Quixote was not cut out for an apostle; he had too much baggage, and proposed almost more to his universal genius than it gave him in works. In his hastiest drawings for the demands of those who furnished his daily bread he was more of a painter than Millet in his richest pictures. Millet had the very temperament of the great Primitives; Daumiet showed him the form, the elements of which belonged to the immediate present.

He took it, stripped off the linear contour, and filled it with the warm expression of his love for his fellow men. Millet has even less need for oil as a medium than the Primitives. Painting to him was often only a means of enhancing his drawing. We never get so near to him as in the woodcuts which his brother executed, in his pen-drawings, and his etchings, which are also more woodcuts than anything else. Even lithography seems to circumscribe his artistic power. He has nowhere found a more perfect medium of expression than such etchings as, for instance, the woman blowing the spoon before feeding the child upon her lap, or *La Leçon de Tricot.* I do not mean by this that Millet's pictures are superfluous. A Christ by Roger van der Weyden that measures a few centimetres may also be enlarged tenfold, and the artist's powers will not fall short of the format.

It is strange that Millet should have been born in France. The more closely he seems to approach the French genius in certain pictures of Daumier's, the more remote from it he seems as a whole. His temperament is rather Germanic, and this not only because no other French artist has so deeply influenced the Germans, the Dutch and the Flemings, or because no other foreigner has ever so stirred the German imagination, but because of his material form. In his pictures he appears as a naïve Rembrandt; in his drawings he writes classic things in a simplified handwriting, akin to that of Dürer. Of all his generation, the Dutchmen gave him most. In his works, as in so many of Corot's interiors, we find beauties of the time of Vermeer, and it is amazing that they should accord with the very Michelangelesque grandeur that reveals its elemental nudity in certain of his drawings.

The great landscape school of Rousseau, Corot, and Dupré accomplished a deed of artistic policy, when it brought Ruysdael and Vermeer to French painting. France had need of the piece of bread that Dutch sincerity offered her, to keep her from dissolution in the arms of the beloved Rubens, and, on the other side, to infuse into the beautiful classic phrase something of that Nature which the landscape painter of literature, J. J. Rousseau, had opportunely applied to language.

Millet played a special part in the transaction. Corot and Diaz were seeking for some intermediary between the imported anti-Latin spirit and the ancient French muse, Diaz more especially in the Delacroix tradition, Corot, with a greater and freer instinct, in his typically French idyl. But neither Corot nor Diaz replenished the new earth; they merely adorned it. Corot's God-given genius transformed it into a land of dreams, in which the ever youthful Greek legend was at home. We should never have felt the want of anything more, had not Millet come, bringing to the vast work of Rousseau, whose trees stretch into the world like giant hands, the gift of speech, an expression of depth and gravity, which held its own against the influences of Rubens and of classicism alike, and henceforth took its place beside them. He set human beings in this new landscape, not this or that individual, but the strenuous type whose spirit was born of this landscape. This could only be the peasant. He made him not beautiful or pleasing, but great, so great that his head towers into the azure, while his heavy wooden shoes grow to the soil. Millet was a peasant in the same complete sense as Rubens, his antithesis, was a patrician.

We can understand why Van Gogh reverenced Millet for remaining in his own sphere. It was only thus that, after a long interval, the world knew one of

AUVERGNATE PEASANT WOMAN SPINNING

FROM A WOODCUT BY PARIS AFTER J. F. MILLET

the great race again, in whose creation all humanity participates with a long-drawn breath, one of those who must come from time to time, that the world may not be thrown out of balance by sheer genius, the great collectivist, who makes the mad mass of selfish activity once more kindle for the common weal.

What makes him immortal is, that through it all he was and remained an artist, that, the time being not ripe for the communism to which he had turned, he had strength enough to forego it in resolute impersonality. To no one was the danger of weakness more obvious. His contemporaries perhaps only needed the cross upon his pictures to hail him saviour. He preferred that he and his should bear it, and awaited the valuation of his pictures in millions in the hereafter.

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Just as a whole host of imitators laid hold of the synthesis that Michelangelo left behind him, so also the synthesis of Millet found many to continue it. The result has not been "a style," as in the case of Michelangelo, not only because Millet's activity was restricted to the field of painting, but because of the period in which he appeared, a period, be it remembered, which is far from complete as yet. The melancholy decadence which was the immediate outcome of Michelangelo's achievement, inevitable with such an exemplar at that particular period, consoles us somewhat for the humble fate of the later artist. That it has nevertheless borne fruit I shall attempt to show, as far as it is possible to demonstrate the fact from the manifestations of the short time that has passed since Millet's death. Perhaps I shall be able in the process to indicate one of the most remarkable antitheses of art-history. Of course Millet suffers from comparison with Michelangelo no less than do his disciples if set beside Rubens. But whereas Michelangelo's formula, as applied to the contemporary forces that produce style, might have been an Après-moi-le-déluge, Millet, in an age so much poorer in beauty, seems to offer the germ of a new form which may perhaps—I say it with all diffidence—bring about a return to a more universal language, that shall not be confined to painting. The reconstruction is as slow as the destruction was rapid. The structure will never rise spontaneously from this hidden artistic fertilisation as did the Renaissance. But all collaboration in the task of re-uniting life and art is precious. If it should succeed, the mysterious figure of Daumier will claim recognition together with Millet, as one to whom a memorable part was assigned in the development it has been left to the future to work out.

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Millet's immediate influence upon the French was nugatory. The usual thing happened. It is not until the prophet is acclaimed by strangers that he is admitted to the sanctuary in his native land.

The Millet idea found its way to Holland; Israels baptized the discovery and made it more accessible. He baptized it with brown sauce, and there was no end to the guests who came to the feast. At one time there was scarcely a Dutchman that wielded a paint-brush who did not work for awhile à la Israels; even the modern exotics, the Toorops, Thorn Prikkers and the rest, began in this way. Millet became a means of popularising Rembrandt, a proceeding that did little for either, and led its adherents far away from the true Dutch tradition of Vermeer's best period. Israels saw in Rembrandt and in Millet only that which may be reduced to a formula. This formula was applied to all sorts of new subjects, and when a more or less incidental attempt was made to formulate anew, it was not

MILLET: DRAWING

WOODCUT BY THE CORP. FRANÇ. DES GRAVEURS SUR BOIS

advantageous to the result. And yet it was a Dutchman who was to go to the root of Millet's art and prove its value.

Israels saw only its emotional side, and in his hands Dutch art became sentimental for the first time. It was an extravagance that became negative, so to speak. He emphasised the elements that Millet always or nearly always avoided. The pictorial envelope which was added was not the natural epidermis employed by Rembrandt, but a net spread for sensibility. It became the melancholy genre as opposed to the cheerful vein of Knaus, &c., and it had the advantage of a less trivial form, that was not merely illustrative.

It was thus that Millet reached Germany. We will look for him there later on.

DRAWING BY J. F. MILLET

AFTER A WOODCUT BY A. LAVIEILLE

SEGANTINI

No school could carry on the manner of Millet. This primitive could only exercise a fruitful influence on primitive forces. Peasants have understood him, sturdy children of Nature, who take small account of knowledge and of letters, who are guided only by Nature in what they do and what they leave undone, who belong to themselves and their own instincts, and who, when they obey something outside themselves, are only led to do so by their instinct.

Segantini is one of these. He is mainly important as a type, as an indication of what may be arrived at, taking Millet as the point of departure, and not by any means as an ideal. He oscillates between curious ideas and changeful technique ; but his processes are those of a peasant ; it is difficult to discuss them ; they are inconsequences such as are only possible to consequent natures.

Segantini, too, translated Millet into romantic terms, even more flagrantly than the others, but so frankly that it causes us less discomfort, and does not excite suspicion. He has not the genius to evoke the spectator's own sensations, the conscious hymn of praise ; he puts them into the picture ; he has not the cool lucidity of the really great artist, and still less of the taste that supplies the defect in others. He bathes his thoughts in Nature, and clothes them in the local colour of his life in the Engadine Alps ; but thought is always prominent in the foreground.

Yet all this is done unconsciously, and does not affect the thing itself, for through it all we are conscious of a purely artistic personality, to whom his creation is all-important. He gives us what he has. Line is his medium of fascination ; it has become more slender, not so virile as Millet's in spite of its crudity, but yet not weakly. There is something new in it, something we do not find in Millet, perhaps because we do not seek it—rhythm. Of course, if we use this term in the widest sense, and take it to mean an individual law of line, a peculiar distribution of masses, Millet has it in superabundant, unsurpassed degree. But we mean something that Millet perhaps despised, but which pleases us to-day, the extraordinary lyric quality, the cadence of the line in Segantini's drawings.

His sense of colour came to his aid here ; this, too, is an element of strength in his manner. In this child of Nature we find conventions that are not in Nature, certainly, but that give a splendid completeness to his treatment of line. His distribution of planes is sometimes almost schematic ; his contrasts, not always deliberate, but always strong, his yellow, his white, are not studies from Nature, but effects proper to the decorator. His pictures are full of light, but connoisseurs will feel the want of air. That he attains to Nature nevertheless, is his art. For this Segantini has given us once more the Alpine landscape, of which painters have so long been afraid.

Segantini's emotional fantasy does not jar upon us, solely because it is not contemplative but naïve, or, rather, it appears so. He was the first to show us what it

SEGANTINI: MOTHERS (LE MADRI)

(A DRAWING)

SEGANTINI: LA VACCA BAGNATA

FLERSHEIM COLLECTION, FRANKFORT-ON-THE-MAIN

looks like on the mountain-tops, when we contemplate them from above, and not from below. The phenomena he deals with are in themselves so remarkable, that a fantastic element seems hardly abnormal in treating them. He creates a *milieu*, and if we believe in it, it is easy enough to accept what he tells us is happening there. This is the secret of all the arts. And then the fancy of this quondam swineherd works with a certain loftiness. It does not merely oscillate between tears and laughter as does the art of his compatriots, even the greatest among them. It has the beneficent repose that eye and mind demand in wall decorations; it seems important only by its form, and only its pictorial qualities give it meaning. The weaknesses of this art are by no means slight. How should an Italian of the Engadine avoid all faults of taste! The robust technique, which has failed to absorb any of those elements of Daumier that lurk in Millet, sometimes conceals a lack of precision; it becomes coarse, that it may not seem weak; not only naïve, but uncultivated. And the large surfaces do not always suggest creative exuberance; the sun in these pictures sometimes glitters judiciously, dazzling the eye that might detect their emptiness.

Nevertheless Segantini will count, at least in our times, as a pioneer on a new domain, in which no other artist out of France has worked so earnestly. He might have gone far indeed, if he had had the good fortune to meet with the artist, who strove after a kindred ideal far from Alpine heights, in Brittany and at Arles, an artist to whom Segantini was perhaps superior by virtue of his physical health.

VINCENT VAN GOGH

Lux mea crux—
Crux mea lux!
NIETZSCHE.

Van Gogh got nearer to the root of the matter. There has perhaps, indeed, never been any one who, quite unconsciously, penetrated so deeply into what we are now agreed to recognise as artistic. He himself turned to it merely as the most natural means of expression.

Van Gogh came from Holland, and was of the generation of Israels. He was born at Groot Zundert on March 30, 1853, and up to his thirtieth year had not found his vocation. Everything and nothing revealed the artist in him; everything, because he had within him a consciousness of the divine fire, a veritably elemental craving to express himself; and nothing, because painting by no means presented itself to him as the natural manifestation of this craving. He was of the stuff of which, in earlier days, the great benefactors of the human race were made; he was essentially an idealist, consumed with a yearning affection for humanity, a man who, under all circumstances, would always have been eager to do good. A natural inclination, the sole commercial element in which was a desire to occupy himself usefully with beautiful things, led him as a young man to seek employment with art-dealers. For several years he was with the well-known firm of Goupil in London, Paris, and the Hague. In 1876 he renounced business; and, obeying his dearest instincts, became a teacher in a school in England, working till the end of the year at Ramsgate and at Isleworth. Difficulties of all kinds only served to strengthen his convictions, and finally to make him resolve to extend his sphere of usefulness by becoming a clergyman. He was a Protestant; his father, the pastor of a small congregation, encouraged him in his determination, and in 1877 Vincent went to Amsterdam to begin his theological studies. But the struggle with all the forms and superficialities that overlie the essentials of faith, became too irksome to him. These were dark days; he felt impelled to change his calling once more; his family looked upon him as a castaway. The following year he left his native land again, this time for Brussels, and accepted a mission from the Protestant congregation to the workmen in the Borinage, reading the Scriptures to them, and expounding the primitive Gospel as he himself understood it.

This period, about the year 1880, was a decisive one in his life. His experiences among his miners were those of every warm-hearted person who is brought into contact with miners for the first time. Intelligent enough not to blind himself to the fact that his unpractised speech could offer little indeed to these mute victims of a sombre lot, everything that he saw increased his longing for a medium of expression; for him there was but one idea in these surroundings, where everything tended naturally to become a symbol to him; this was, to

VINCENT VAN GOGH: LANDSCAPE
KESSLER COLLECTION, WEIMAR

show his sympathy by some means or the other. He did so by recording what he saw on paper. Thus, that which had thrust him from one calling into another, from one country into another, became a means of salvation to him.

This time his choice was final. In 1881 we find him again in Holland with his parents in the little village of Etten in North Brabant, drawing everything that came to his hand. One of his cousins was married to the painter, Anton Mauve. Mauve's advice was sought, and he took Vincent into his studio at the Hague. Here Van Gogh learned to paint. But the pupil and the teacher did not get on well together—which is hardly surprising! Anything Van Gogh could have learnt from Mauve must have been acquired in a few weeks! His brother Theodore gave him the means to set up a tiny studio of his own at the Hague. Here his teachers were those great Dutchmen of the seventeenth century, who silently proclaim their immortal tenets in the Mauritshuis, rather than his contemporaries. In 1883 he returned to the country, painting those powerful studies of Brabant peasants, in whose faces he discovered his own original physiognomy. The *Mangeurs de Pommes de Terre* dates from this period—he painted it at Nuenen in 1885—the grandest portrait ever painted of this *être sacré de pure vérité*, as Van de Velde calls the peasant in his beautiful study, *Du Paysan en Peinture*.* Earlier painters of rural subjects had exercised their wit, their sense of the grotesque, their cynicism upon him ; the modern who misread Millet sought in him a legitimate outlet for sentimental emotion ; to the æstheticism of a Huysmans he was simply repulsive. Van Gogh saw in him a Titanic healthfulness, rising like some rugged monument out of the prevailing corruption of the times.

Even then the real Van Gogh was complete. But he would not trust himself. In 1885 he was a pupil of the Academy at Antwerp for a few months. It was perhaps here that he conceived his gloomy prison-yard scenes. In 1886 he at last went to France, where the quality of his art that still lay dormant, colour, likewise developed with amazing rapidity. Here he found the few friends of his life, or rather they found him in the little shop in the Rue Clauzel belonging to Père Tanguy, the only dealer who took up his pictures. Van Gogh commemorated him afterwards in the fine portrait belonging to Rodin, of the man against a wall hung with Japanese coloured prints. The chief of these friends were Gauguin and Emile Bernard. Vincent worked for a time with the latter in Cormon's studio, which Lautrec had quitted the year before.

The influence of Paris upon him was not altogether happy; it sought to divide a being who was an absolute unity. He made the acquaintance of the Impressionists, whose analytic art was the antithesis of his own, which aimed, above all things, at concentration, but whose logical deductions forced themselves upon his intelligence. The pictures he painted at this time betray the influence of Pissarro ; when he came to know and reverence Seurat, he even attempted division. The best picture he painted in Paris was the *Quatorze Juillet*, to which I shall return presently; in others—the medallion, for instance, now belonging to Vollard—his individuality seems entirely obscured. In all we are conscious of an arrest of his powers, the uncertainty the vast city induced in him (he speaks of it in later letters referring to this time). But we must not think of Van Gogh as the peasant, falling under the wheels in the city. Rather did his danger lie in his remarkable instinct for culture, eager to embrace everything, and

* "Edition de l'Avenir Social." Brussels. 1892.

insistent upon order, where disorder is habitual in all relations of life. Julien Leclerc, who made his acquaintance in 1888, describes him as a nervous, chilly individual, suggestive of Spinoza, and concealing a violent intellectual activity under an exterior reserve.

Vincent breathed freely again, when he found himself once more among peasants at Arles. His letters to Emile Bernard and to his brother, published by the "Mercure de France," reveal his conception of art, a conception which would only have excited the laughter of the boulevardier. "Christ," he says, "was the greatest of all artists, because He made immortal men, and not works of art, because His words, which He, as a grand seigneur, disdained to set down in writing, were mightier in their power over others than marbles and pictures, because He knew that they would endure, when the forms of the world in which He lived had long passed away." Here we have the whole of Van Gogh, the man who believed, even more fervently than in art, in a tremendous pure creative power. given to men to make others happy; which urges the individual not to gratify his own vanity by his art, but to find satisfaction in the hard fate of a great artist such as he himself was. He repeatedly lamented to his brother, that pictures and statues were not living things. It depressed him to think "that life is created with less effort than art."

It was natural that Millet should influence him: Millet, whose attitude to Christianity was akin to his own, and who invented the divine gesture of his *Sower* to express it. But Millet was made of other stuff. He enjoyed the Nature he painted. The gravity that breathes from his pictures is that of the countryman, familiar with hard work, but confident of its results. Van Gogh is all harsh tragedy; he did not go to Nature; she dragged him to her. To be nearer to her, he, the Dutchman, nourished in the northern calm of Rembrandt, Frans Hals, and Vermeer, went to the wonderland of France, to Provence, where the sun bathes the earth in pure colour, and men and things are still as simple and as great as when the Romans built their arenas there.

Frans Hals was the Dutch element in Van Gogh, who always retained his peculiar vehement handling. With all the impetuosity Frans Hals employed to give life and colour to his portraits, with all the turbulent vigour Daumier used to kindle his darkest sauce to flames, and with an irresistible impulse towards symbolism, Van Gogh rushed upon the new country, in which all the conditions were sharply opposed to those of his own nation: flame met flame. All his pictures are battle; battle in the literal sense; he painted, buffeted by the mistral; the effects he sought lasted sometimes but a few moments, and had to be got in one sitting. And even more urgently was he driven forward by the frantic fire within, that blazed high under the burning skies above him: creating, creating—"Vite, vite, vite et pressé comme le moissonneur qui se tait sous le soleil ardent, se concentre pour en abattre."

Van Gogh seemed hardly to paint his pictures, but rather to breathe them on to the canvas, panting and gasping. We may take it that he painted about three-fifths of his pictures at Arles. His stay here lasted from 1887 to the middle of 1889. In this space of a little over two years, he painted several hundred pictures. These were slight superficial manifestations, implying long and exhausting preparation. Van Gogh may aptly be called a Vulcan; the phrase a Romantic writer applied to Delacroix was no less descriptive of him: he carried about a sun in his head and a hurricane in his heart. But in his case, a certain

pathological significance must be read into the poetic words. All that this man undertook was carried to a terrific pitch. It is gruesome to see him paint—a kind of orgy, in which the colours were splashed about like blood. He did not paint with hands, but with naked senses; special organs were given him. He became one with the Nature he created, and painted himself in the flaming clouds, wherein a thousand suns threaten the earth with destruction, in the startled trees that seem to cry aloud to Heaven, in the awful immensity of his plains. He seems sometimes to have made himself a hole in the earth and to have painted from it. This was how he executed the picture belonging to the younger Bernheim, which so delighted Monet, *Les Coquelicots*, a landscape without a sky, a kind of microscopic slide, showing a bit of fruitful earth. He ventured upon still-life, the genre in which Cézanne did his best work. Van Gogh's idea was to calm himself with these essays. He was fond of setting a fruit-basket diagonally across the canvas and filling it with apples. With the great Cézanne these subjects were actually "still-life," a splendid and grandiose version of the Dutch "nature morte," the most remarkable creation of a brilliantly selected palette. With Van Gogh, the term "still-life," applied to these amazingly vital masses of fruit seems almost an irony. Vallotton owns one of the "sedatives," as Vincent called them. The apples glow, they seem to be on the point of bursting; the whole essence of their species seems to be concentrated in them; a piece of furious vitality has fallen by chance into this basket. We marvel at the extraordinary and unerring taste that has placed the basket thus and not otherwise, and piled the fruits just in this fashion. We are often surprised at Cézanne's arbitrariness, his indifference to questions of arrangement in spite of his careful calculation of effects. In the wildest of Van Gogh's fantasies one can always trace a strong, methodical hand, co-ordinating images and welding them into pictures, occasionally by an almost superhuman effort, and often achieving extraordinary delicacy the while. M. Maurice Fabre's *Gipsies* with their van, M. Schuffenecker's *Route de Provence* with the mail-coach, and M. Hessel's *Drawbridge* are lyric harmonies full of the most dainty passages, in which the painter's temperament only serves to make the grace he saw as vital as possible. Of course we must not look for sentimental charm in this grace, and we must accept the means of which it makes use. We must not think of Raphael, but must remember that a smile sometimes broke even into the stupendous decorative art of primitive races.

But indeed it is difficult to express Van Gogh in terms of art. His was animal-art, if we may so express it, because it is always absolutely vital, because it is power; and power is always beauty. His harmonies are of a physical order, and therefore outside the melancholy or the delight to which the mind is stirred by other sorrowful or cheerful pictures. The reaction induced by his works is at first a purely physical one. The planes of his canvases, which seem to have been produced, not by brushes, but by the stonemason's implements, scream, and we are sometimes tempted to scream in unison, just as we feel inclined during a storm to shout aloud with the thunder. It is the cry of the human animal, whose blood is quickened by the enigmatic relation of the individual to the cosmos, who yearns to penetrate into his environment, into Nature, and destroys either this or himself if he does not succeed. Van Gogh did not produce his art; it was as much a part of himself as is some material function a part of the body; it was not something external to him, but his closest idiosyncrasy, joy or suffering. To this man, who first turned to art in his later years, and then perhaps only as to a pis

aller, it was apparently a thing inherent, with which perforce he had to live and die.

That this pathological phenomenon should have resulted in æsthetic achievement is no more remarkable than that Nature, of whatever kind it may be, produces beauty. Van Gogh regarded a striving after perfection as a natural morality. He was a cleanly animal. He owed more to Daumier and to Delacroix than to all the Impressionists.* Here the peasant, who regretted that Paris did not possess more "tableaux en sabots," found a kindred spirit. When he took the group of the three topers with the child at the table, from Daumier's *Buveurs*,† he did Daumier the highest honour in his power and—like Delacroix, when he used Raphael's composition in the Vatican for his *Heliodorus* in St. Sulpice—added to his own laurels by producing one of his most individual pictures. He found in Daumier the justification of his own linear exaggerations, the flaming play of his aspiring lines, that seem to crouch in order to strike more surely. He had also a great admiration for Cézanne, and an unbounded veneration for Monticelli, to whom he was drawn more closely by that magic South where Cézanne painted his fruits and the old gipsy his marvellous colour fantasies. In a letter to Aurier, containing perhaps the most complete revelation of an artist's psychology ever penned—it appears in Aurier's *Œuvres Posthumes*—he almost indignantly assigns the praise awarded to himself to Monticelli, even ranking Jeannin's and the aged Guost's flower-pieces above his own works. He esteemed Meissonier, because Mauve thought highly of him, and venerated Ziem, because Ziem venerated Delacroix. This naïveté does not, however, preclude very delicate appreciations. He speaks of a Monticelli at Lille, "autrement riche et certes non moins français que le *Départ pour Cythère* de Watteau," and opines that no other artist has approved himself so directly the heir of Delacroix, though Monticelli received Delacroix' teaching at secondhand, through Diaz and Ziem. . . .

These few lines also contain all the physiology of Monticelli that was valuable to Van Gogh. He made his start under the spell of the Impressionists. Pissarro had the same influence upon him as upon Gauguin and later upon Bernard. His *Quatorze Juillet à Asnières*, one of the very best of his pre-Arlesian pictures, is painted very thinly, the colour divided into minute green and yellow particles on a gray ground. At Arles he came to think this technique insufficient. He was temperamentally incapable of consistent work on this system, by which Signac fixed the vapourous quality of Southern landscape; and further, he had not time for it. The exact opposite attracted him in Monticelli: the heavy fabric of loaded colour, with which the old magician produced his thousand accidents. Van Gogh exaggerated this, but at the same time, he simplified it, he rejected what was petty and incidental, reduced the palette to single pure colours, laid on in large, coarse fragments, and added his own temperament as the amalgam.

There are many pictures in a single picture by Van Gogh. His brush strokes not only give things that force themselves upon the eye from a distance with elemental power, but they combine to produce an extraordinary play on the

* He wrote in 1888 from Arles: "Je trouve que ce que j'ai appris à Paris s'en va, et que je reviens aux ideés qui m'étaient venues à la campagne avant de connaître les Impressionistes. Et je serais peu étonné si sous peu les Impressionistes trouvaient à redire sur ma façon de faire qui a plutot été fecondée par les idées de Delacroix que par les leurs."

† Van Gogh's picture belongs to M. Aghion, Paris. The Daumier, which Vincent turned to account, of course only very freely, after the fashion of Millet or Delacroix, is, I think, in America.

VINCENT VAN GOGH: THE GOOD SAMARITAN

PAINTED FROM A LITHOGRAPH AFTER THE PICTURE BY DELACROIX

surface, forming a free and varied ornament and giving a mysterious animation to the background, as well as a rare splendour of texture to things that stand out against it in sharply defined contours. Fundamentally it is, of course, nothing but a development of the granulations which give the quality to every surface in painting ; a special structure of the brush-strokes, in short, that development of the manual element in brushing which the Venetians began; that which distinguishes the later painting from that of the Primitives ; that which, apart from colour and composition in the vulgar sense, delights us in Titian and Tintoretto, Rubens and Watteau, Delacroix and Monet, that on which the majority of contemporary painters base the whole of their art. But Van Gogh uses it as a means which determines the character of his pictures more clearly than any other element in them, a means whereby he concentrates his material in a colour-extract of all possible materials. Nothing was farther from his purpose than optical illusion ; no modelling tempts us to believe in a corporeal presence, his picture is always as flat as a Gobelin tapestry ; but it has a richness no textile could approach, even if woven of gold and precious stones, and this richness is so organic, that it affects us like Nature itself. His palette may be told off on the fingers of one hand. Prussian blue, pure yellow to orange, emerald and Veronese green, and red were to him what white, gray, rose-colour and black were to Velazquez, lemon yellow, pale blue, and pearl gray to Vermeer. The problem of complementary colours was in his hand, so to speak, rather than in his head ; it did not dominate him. He ventured on the most daring combinations, juxtaposed a resonant Prussian blue and a tender red, but chose his quantities so unerringly that his most audacious effects seem the most natural. He never used blue without an accompanying yellow, or his luminous red without orange. M. Aghion's extraordinary picture, the avenue with the Roman tombs at Arles, is a marvellous example of this system. Into the two mighty rows of trees, that stand in front against the blue, and behind run into the pure yellow of the sky, brought to a narrow strip by the perspective, shoot streams of orange tinged with red, forming deep blood-red pools upon the ground. It is a colossal combat of colours, that take on an almost objective significance, so convincing is the manner in which they are used.*

We must grasp Van Gogh thoroughly, to recognise the relative nature of all modern colour-theories, and above all, to get some definite idea of the inscrutable laws that govern the quantitative distribution of colour-masses. Roughly speaking, it might almost be supposed that the quantity of a colour juxtaposed to one or more other colours, is of greater importance than the quality, and behind this is concealed again, the old, inestimable importance of composition in a picture. Hence it may perhaps be said that Van Gogh's finest work is *Le Bon Samaritain*, which is a free rendering of Delacroix' lithograph. In this work of from 60 to 70 cm. Van Gogh exhausted his whole palette. The dominant is blue, and to this all the colours of the picture are brought into relation. It begins in the background, which contains in nuce all those elements that are brought into vigourous contrast in the dramatic group. The light blue tones, which also distinguish the famous contemporary ravine-pictures painted at Arles, predominate in the background. They are enriched with white, occasionally with pink, light green, and to the left, with dark orange. The contours of the mountains rise in delicate gradations to pale pink, and at the highest point to pale green, and are given in waved

* *Cf.* what he himself said of his colour-symbolism, in the foot-note below.

brush-strokes, which accentuate the direction of the inner hatchings. The group is composed of the somewhat rusty but brilliant colour of the mule, (produced by a mixture of lac de garance, white and blue), the Prussian blue of the wounded man's drapery, and the orange of the Samaritan's. But such dry enumerations as these fail to suggest any idea of the richness of effect, even when reinforced by our excellent reproduction. The beast in particular, whose strangely deep colour is the focus of the whole picture, defies description. It forms a mysterious ground tone for the still more mysterious flesh-tones of the sufferer and the dark skin of the Samaritan. The blue swells marvellously from the background to the foreground, *i.e.*, from above to below, reaching its utmost volume in the Samaritan's breeches, where it blends into a resonant chord with the orange of the tunic, and the greenish yellow tones of the legs. On the other side, the orange stands on a field made up of strong, bright green splashes of colour on the fading blue. Here the light pink of the road winds upwards into the mountains, is repeated in the soil of the foreground, and above near the pale green of the cleft between the mountains; it strikes a stronger note in the border of the Samaritan's turban, where it leads up from the tawny flesh tones to the isolated deep-red of the fez, that glows ruby-like in the centre, the fiery eye of the picture.

Apart from Delacroix and Daumier, Van Gogh, when he sought inspiration from others in composition, relied on Millet with a sort of fervid veneration—on that Millet, be it understood, who comprised Daumier. Theodore van Gogh's widow at Bassum has a number of drawings, which Vincent borrowed more or less from Millet. He looked upon Millet, not as a rival to be surpassed, but as the embodiment of a doctrine, almost of a religion, in which he believed. "Rembrandt and Delacroix," he wrote, "painted the person of Jesus, Millet his teaching."

Of this teaching, we are here concerned only with those traditional elements to which Millet gave form. For Van Gogh it was a kind of haven, and I pass over the superfluous question how much he added to Millet, or Millet to him. It was not poverty of invention that drew him to Millet and Delacroix, but rather an excess of productive energy, which he was only able to curb by keeping it within the limits of a prescribed alien form. Let us hear what he says himself in one of his letters:

"Eussé-je eu les forces pour continuer, j'aurais fait des saints et des saintes femmes d'après nature, qui auraient paru d'un autre âge: ç'auraient été des bourgeois d' à présent, ayant pourtant des rapports avec des chrétiéns fort primitifs. —Les émotions que cela cause sont cependant trop fortes. J'y resterais.

"Mais plus tard, plus tard je ne dis pas que je ne viendrai pas à la charge. . . . Il ne faut pas songer à tout cela, il faut faire, fût-ce des études de choux et de salade pour se calmer, et après avoir été calmé, alors . . . ce dont on sera capable."

Well, he painted his saints, after all. Every picture he painted was holy ecstasy, even when the theme was a bunch of lettuces.

A primitive in a sense we can hardly conceive nowadays, lived in this creature. For years he had dreams of a great association of artists. He believed that an individual could do nothing of permanent value, and longed for works "that transcend the powers of the individual." He frequently begged his friends Gauguin and Bernard to come to Arles and collaborate with him. One was to undertake composition, another colour, etc. The project had also become an idée fixe with his brother. Theodore van Gogh, the younger of the two, who provided for Vincent's material wants with touching affection, had slowly gained

over Boussod et Valadon to the Impressionists ; he arranged exhibitions of Pissarros, Seurats, Monets, Renoirs and the rest, and contributed not a little to their conquest of the public. The brothers wished to found a society which should exhibit the best works of the moderns in the large towns of France and of foreign countries, giving fit representation to recognised painters, and the means of living and working to the others. All that was lacking was a generous banker to provide the funds.

Vincent found in Millet the basis of a primitive popular art, models for portraits of humanity. He made the gravity of Millet graver, I might almost say more Lutheran. The ancient Greek spirit which breathes from many of Millet's soft pencil drawings like a natural sound, gives place in him to a gigantic, almost a barbaric instinct, in relation to which the Millet form appears only as a softening element. There is nothing classical about him ; he reminds us rather of the early Gothic stonemasons ; the technique of his drawings is that of the old wood-carvers ; some of his faces look as if they had been cut with a blunt knife in hard wood. The ugliness of his personages, the " mangeurs de pommes de terre," carries the primitive ruggedness of the older painters to the region of the colossal, where it occasionally resembles materialised phantoms of horror. He projected such things as *La Berceuse* not for amateurs, but for common folks, and it was one of his—all too natural—disappointments, that no peasant would give himself up to sitting.* In his painted portraits, the hard wood of the drawings seems sometimes to be blent with gleaming metal. Schuffenecker owns the most masterly of his portraits of himself. No one who has seen this tremendous head with the square forehead, the staring eyes and despairing jaw can ever forget it. It is so full of a terrible grandeur of line, colour, and psychology, that it takes away one's breath, and it is hard to know whether one is repelled by its monstrous exaggeration of beauty, or by the lurking madness in the head that conceived it.

Van Gogh's self-destruction in the cause of artistic expression is tragic, because

* In " Les Hommes d'Aujourd'hui " (vol. viii. p. 390) Emile Bernard quotes a passage from a letter about *La Berceuse :* " La nuit, en mer, les pêcheurs voient sur l'avant de leur barque une femme surnaturelle dont l'aspect ne les effraie point, car elle est la berceuse, celle qui tirait les cordes de la corbeille où *momes* ils geignaient ; c'est elle qui revient chanter au roulis du grand berceau de planches les cantiques de l'enfance, les cantiques qui reposent et qui consolent de la dure vie." He says that Van Gogh painted *La Berceuse* intending to hang it up in some sailors' tavern in Marseilles or Sainte-Marie. Two large suns were to hang upon it right and left, the strong yellow of which was to symbolise the brightness of love. In these poems we feel the spirit of Zola, whose influence upon Van Gogh was stronger than that of any other poet of his time. In the beautiful letter from Arles already quoted, he formulated his symbolism : " Au lieu de chercher à rendre exactement ce que j'ai devant les yeux, je me sers de la couleur plus arbitrairement pour m'exprimer fortement. Laissons cela en tant que théorie, mais je vais te donner un exemple de ce que je veux dire ; je voudrais faire le portrait d'un ami artiste qui rêve de grands rêves, qui travaille comme le rossignol chante, parce que c'est ainsi la nature. Cet homme sera blond. Je voudrai mettre dans le tableau l'amour que j'ai pour lui. Je le peindrai donc tel quel aussi fidèlement que je pourrai—pour commencer. Mais le tableau n'est pas fini ainsi. Pour le finir je vais maintenant être coloriste arbitraire. J'exagère le blond de sa chevelure, j'arrive aux tons orangés, aux chromes, au citron pâle. Derrière la tête—au lieu de peindre le mur banal du mesquin appartement—je peins l'infini, je fais un fond simple du bleu le plus riche, le plus intense que je puisse confectionner, et par cette simple combinaison, la tête blonde eclairée sur ce fond bleu riche obtient un effect mystérieux comme l'étoile dans l'azur profond. Pareillement, dans le portrait de paysan j'ai procédé de cette façon. Mais en supposant l'homme terrible que j'avais à faire, en plein midi, en pleine fournaise de la moisson. De là, des oranges fulgurants comme du fer rougi, de là, des tons de vieil or lumineux dans les ténèbres. Ah, mon cher ! les bonnes personnes ne verront dans cette exagération que de la caricature. Mais qu'est-ce que cela nous fait ? "

it was a natural sacrifice, not a self-defilement, the act of a perfectly healthy consciousness, shattered by insufficient physical powers of resistance. "The more ill I am, the more of an artist do I become," he writes, with no thoughts of perverse joys in his mind. He records the same simple fact with which Delacroix reckoned, and Rembrandt, "the old wounded lion with a cloth round his head, still grasping his palette." The tragic result was inevitable, because it fulfilled a natural doom. The only means by which he could escape despair, retain his self-respect, and repay the devotion of the brother who had spent so much on canvas and colours was, to make constant progress, to loosen more and more the slender threads that bound his individuality to a failing body, and penetrate ever more deeply into the mystery that dazzles the eyes, to give bodily substance to the artistic soul, even when it was parting soul and body. It was heroism, because the result was hardly doubtful to him, a peasant's heroism, because it went straight on its way without any dramatic gesture, simply and naturally. In one of his letters Vincent speaks of a worthy fellow who died for lack of a proper doctor: "He bore it quietly and reasonably, only saying: 'It is a pity I can't have any other doctor.' He died with a shrug of the shoulders that I shall never forget."

In some such fashion Vincent's death must be explained. Even in the early days at Arles, when Gauguin was with him, be once threatened to cast off the weary flesh. He came to himself again, and went voluntarily to the Arles asylum, where he painted some wonderful things, among others the Schuffenecker portrait of himself, the cloistered garden of the asylum with the splendid flower-beds (belonging to Hessel), and some beautiful flower-pieces. In his letters to Théo he reveals a marvellous memory, clinging to childish recollections, as if to interpose his home between himself and the strange power that sought his life; he recovered so far, that he went to Saint Rémy, to find a new field of activity there. But his brother was in trouble, and when Vincent came to visit him in Paris he recognised his own danger, and looked about him for help. He found it in Dr. Gachet.

Gachet, who still pursues his avocation and his art robustly,* had a comfortable, hospitable house at Auvers-sur-Oise, near Valmandois, where Daumier spent his last years of blindness. Daubigny painted there, Cézanne came thither in 1880 at Gachet's recommendation, and lived there for several years, painting many fine things; to many others the happy land and the old artist-doctor's table were a solace. Even Van Gogh seemed to have painted himself into health at Auvers. He came in the middle of 1889. His Auvers pictures have not, of course, the intoxicating richness of strong colour revealed to him by the south; but on the other hand, he achieved an unprecedented development in his play of line. His own portrait and his portrait of Gachet are purely rhythmic works, quite free from hardness, marked by a perfectly conscious application of his unrivalled talent for decorative tasks. In the roses, and in the arrangement of chestnut leaves and blossoms, a happy harmonious spirit seems to be weaving its beautiful dreams, remote from all dramatic violence.

Any one who had followed the course of Van Gogh's life could hardly have been deceived by the change. The last epoch was a beautiful interlude, but it could only have preluded night-fall. Van Gogh had said what he had to say. Beings like him must fight fever by fever. When he had raged his fill, as far as this is possible to decent folks, he had to go, swiftly, in the midst of beauty, to escape a

* He is a painter, and, together with his son, a yearly contributor to the Indépendants under the name of Van Ryssel.

VINCENT VAN GOGH: PUBLIC GARDENS AT ARLES

GUSTAVE FAYET COLLECTION, BÉZIERS

long decline into ugliness, into idiotic illness. When the doctor found him with the bullet in his body, and asked him the unnecessary why, he shrugged his shoulders. That night and the day following they smoked several pipes together, talking of art and of other beautiful things. Gachet thinks the smell of turpentine was injurious to Van Gogh, and also that painting in the open air had done him no good; he could not overcome the habit of tearing his hat off when he was at work, and the sun at last burnt all the hair off his scalp, till it was only separated from the brain by a thin case of bone. He died on July 28, 1890.

They buried him in the little churchyard at Auvers, and the old doctor planted a great cluster of yellow sunflowers over him, which were in full bloom when I was there last.*

I have dealt elsewhere with Van Gogh's anarchism, showing what seems to me his strong positive instinct, as opposed to the rhetorical anarchism of Morris, Crane, and others. His work is the strongest possible contrast to an indolent, state-supported art, meet to adorn the house of mediocrity. He destroys it. Here he may appear as the ruthless barbarian, casting off all regard for the law of the dwelling. The same hostility shows itself in Munch, another anarchist of equal sincerity. But what seems to the Philistine barbarism in Van Gogh, is often actually so in Munch. It must be evident that it is impossible to conceive of an interior in which Munch's most typical works would be in keeping, and this at once restricts his importance to the field of the extremest abstract art. Van Gogh merely negatives the contemporary domicile. In this, his pictures have the effect of blows with a club. But a setting where he would be harmonious, which he could adorn, is not only conceivable, but already in process of evolution, and here, again, his sacrifice is glorified with the nimbus of the peasant, who fertilises the earth anew with his own blood. It is improbable that the time will ever come when his pictures will be appreciated by the layman; it is more conceivable that pictures should cease to be produced altogether, than that Van Gogh's should become popular. But his portion in the development of the modern interior is already assured; it is indirect, but all the more penetrating for this reason; his tints and colours are elements, which serve and will serve in the most varied form. This gives him perhaps a greater importance than can be appreciated by a generation so near to William Morris as our own. Here, indeed, there is something new. The mind intent on the consciously decorative effort of our times found in Van Gogh, and not solely in his latest pictures, unhoped-for and very novel sustenance. It is indeed possible that this treasure conceals the one perfectly novel element of our essays in the formation of a style. If the connection seems slight we must remember in all humility that our efforts in this direction are in their infancy, and that this is the reason why this aspect of Van Gogh has hitherto served merely to complete the many-sided relations, which all progressive art will link with his wealth. Even his treatment of the coloured surface is calculated to deepen the teaching of the Japanese, so fruitful at present; it completes what Degas and Lautrec added to the importation, keeping the golden principle of simplification always in view. At the same time he achieves a splendour of effect beyond anything ever yet achieved by easel pictures. His masterpiece, *The Ravine*, a render-

* Dr. Gachet is at work on a monograph of Van Gogh, to be illustrated with etchings from the artist's pictures. He has pressed his son and several other young men into his service, and they first copy the pictures stroke for stroke in colour, and then etch them on the copper. He intends to deal with Cézanne in the same manner.

ing of a remarkable rocky chasm near Arles, an intoxicating harmony of rich blue tones, is a technical model of incalculable value. Nature seems merely to have been used to enhance the richness of the tapestry-like effect by an accidental abnormal concatenation of strong lines, which disappear into an infinity of new planes. If it should prove feasible to transfer such works to large surfaces, and make them durable, we might almost cherish the illusion of having gained a decorative method equal to that of the old mosaicists, and combining the splendour of Gobelin with its distinction.

Modern decorative artists have not been unmoved by Van Gogh. His surfaces have proved helpful to the young Parisian painters, Denis, Ranson, Sérusièr, and Bonnard, and his brush-stroke to the most important of modern ornamentists, Van de Velde. Van Gogh has sifted out from the great epoch of the Impressionists not all, but some highly important results, destined to a far-reaching influence even outside the sphere of abstract painting to which this school confined itself.

If we keep this connection in view and trace the road back from Van Gogh to his greatest exemplar, the beloved master of Barbizon appears in a new light deeply intertwined with all that moves us to-day. Van Gogh drew Millet into the radiant circle of Manet, Monet, and Cézanne, who were in danger of forgetting him, and reminded them what Millet's great fructifier, Daumier, had possessed of pictorial power.

And at the same time, this last of the great Dutchmen who had drifted to a foreign haven maintained his national tradition. He brought back to it what it had lent to the great French generation of 1830, remaining faithful to its noblest law : that we must follow Nature, and more especially our own nature.

CONSTANTIN MEUNIER

As line is all that can remain to us of Millet, line, to which so many aspirations are directed in these latter days, Millet was predestined to give an impetus to sculpture, which, down to his time, had never lost touch with Italy, and had always shown embarrassment when brought into the most superficial relation to modernity. It was natural enough that peasant painting should be translated into plaster and bronze, without further result than the attainment of what became in these mediums a doubly deplorable genre-art.

Between the years 1870 and 1880 Belgium was a sanctuary of the Millet cult. While the last descendant of the great Flemish colourists, Henri de Braekeleer, was giving final expression to the old Netherlandish tradition in his richly coloured interiors, a very democratic, sternly realistic community, deriving partly from Millet, partly from Courbet, was growing up in and round Brussels. One of its members was Rops, whose first pictures and drawings bear the stamp of Millet very distinctly—a beautified Millet—and who was perhaps indebted to the Barbizon master's line for the one solid element of his art. Meunier, a far more vigourous artist, was his colleague.

Meunier was no facile craftsman. More than once he changed his tools; when the clay was refractory, be tried the brush, and vice versâ. For a long time success seemed to elude him. Like many of his generation, and nearly all his school, he was an old man before recognition came to him.

Sculpture, to which he did not devote himself entirely till his maturity, was the one form of expression proper to him. His so-called pictures, mere coloured drawings, are serious narratives. He has things to say, which are interesting because they were unknown till he declared them; but they are not set forth with that richness which creates out of itself, and not out of the thing it envelops.

His sculpture is very different. This man, with his gentle childlike heart, to whom the miners of his native land were not only interesting subjects but beloved brethren, needed an art that should compel a certain compression of ideas. He contented himself by making expressive busts of his people. One thing was of service to him here, his respect for the old masters. This reverence, which tends to destroy the individuality of most sculptors, gave Meunier the realist strength. The classic convention was for him the indispensable restraining influence of a healthy nature. He makes it evident that the comparison of Michelangelo and Millet is no empty phrase. This was perhaps his main achievement: he proclaimed, in his modest language, the connection between these two great men.

The voluntary restrictions, which prevented any strong individualisation in Meunier's work, which necessitated his constant use of the familiar type he had produced years before in a small and exquisite relief of a workman's head, preserved him from those realistic trivialities to which he might have been tempted by his

materials. We can imagine what a thorough-going "naturalist" would have made of a gang of raw puddlers!

Meunier, unlike the poet of *The Weavers*, did not spring from the same stock as those whose history he recorded. He knew nothing of social theories and of pathology. But he was as impressionable as the clay he moulded. And everything he felt, as he watched his workers going forth to their labour in the morning, and returning bent and weary in the evening, he sought to express in the few forms, the stern convention he had made his law, and to incorporate with classic forms.

It was thus he succeeded in creating his type. Just as the ancients had made theirs to express strength and beauty, so his embodied the ideal of labour. Only thus could he honour the people whom he loved, and thus he contributed to the enlightenment of our age, and did perhaps more for the proletariat than all the social agitators. He gave something better than pity—dignity. He treated them as the ancients had treated their Zeus, their Hector, their David.

He shows us, not the sweat of the worker, but his nobility; not the individual in the lowliness of his destiny, but the race, the genus of toil; no episode, but the essence of this solemn history.

His method is that of Millet; he sacrifices the best of which he is capable, to a single strong expression. There was no genius in this expression; compared with the mighty fount of light that gushed from Daumier's hand as soon as he touched the clay, his successor's radiance is that of the little lamp which his miners carry to their work, the lamp that is their substitute for the sun.

But Meunier had the sincerest form of talent, which does not seek to give more than it possesses. It is not perhaps possible to say very much that is new by his method, but he will always remain an example of the virtue which was his finest heritage from Millet: honesty.

And for the people with whom he dealt his seems the only possible treatment. They are hardly individuals. The dreary toil that bends their bones all in one direction makes them all alike; exertion wears away superfluous flesh and leaves only skin, bone, and muscle; the common life under a common pressure even destroys the difference of sex.

And yet from this uniform mass there flows a mighty idea, a revival of the old watchword of the Church: Suffer, that ye may live.

Meunier laid hold of the idea with the same fervour that once inspired the artist-servant of the Church and raised a monument therewith.

Simplicity alone can produce such harmonies. It is evident that this meditative idealism pales before the brilliant gesture of the great cynic, Daumier, who mocked at his own age with all the weight of antiquity. We are deeply touched by the redeeming act of Millet, who found a compromise, winning love from mockery. We stand helpless, with an admiration akin to horror, before Daumier's gigantic force. Millet softens its cruelty, calming the furious line of the conqueror. Meunier shows it to the people.

Meunier stands in much the same relation to Millet as did the painters of the Quattrocento to Donatello. Then it was the sculptor who gave inspiration to the painter; here it is the painter who gives to the sculptor.

The situation corresponds to the development of our art-history, and makes it almost superfluous to point out those pictorial elements which, in the good and the bad sense, Meunier's art shares with all modern sculpture. We will not insist on the imperfections of an art that approaches another too closely, not to

CONSTANTIN MEUNIER: HARVEST

(A RELIEF FROM THE „LABOUR" MONUMENT)

lose something of its own original compass; let us rejoice rather in the culminating power of that other in Millet, becoming rich enough to give of its abundance.*

* * * * * * *

In the art of foreign countries Millet was an encouragement to Romanticism that was not without its dangers. Millet's inexhaustible value could only manifest itself to its full extent after a strong revulsion to Nature, after the conquest of physiological knowledge to the fullest extent. In France, where this process was carried out, Millet became a help, at the very moment when this physiological side of painting threatened to lose itself in infinity.

He helped many. To Camille Pissarro, the most diligent conqueror of Nature, Millet gave a line that served the veteran of Eragny in the production of his happiest idyls. But more important and more typical of Millet's position in modern painting was the support he lent to a greater artist. In his desire to resolve painting into divine colours, and into a pictorial rhythm guided by the highest inspiration, Renoir found a safe refuge in Millet, who kept him from stumbling in a very hazardous path. In his red chalk drawings, where Nature herself seems to be singing the sweetest melodies, it is a milder Millet who gives the note. Millet rarely has that germinal quality which whispers in the young man's drawings; when he is in a like tender vein, he makes Greek verses which the Impressionist could not understand. Yet Renoir seems akin to him; he is of the same family. Even Millet's classicism is not altogether lost in his descendant. In his most imposing creations, where the son greatly surpasses the father by other means, a reminiscence of the great master who bore about in his breast a world of which even he himself was hardly conscious, steals into the concert like some familiar melody.

Wholly classical in feeling, Millet nevertheless created a new perspective side by side with that of the classicists, which, being natural, has this advantage over the old forms, that natural painters can turn it to account. And thus the Fontainebleau master will be of use to many who are not solely concerned with the painting of reflected sunlight.

Delacroix was the flesh, Millet the marrow of French painting. We must not lightly dub the one a Romanticist, the other a Realist. Nothing could be more remote from the genius of Millet than the brutal destruction of high ideals symbolised by Klinger's translations of Menzel into stone. Rather was he the gardener, who fastens up the heavy trusses of drooping blossom, and waters their roots. His genius embraced not only a resistance to the allurements of nebulous worlds, but a strong impulse to the necessary evolutions of our art.

* The reader is referred to the two recent biographies of Meunier, by Camille Lemonnier (Floury, Paris), and Karl Scheffler (Bard, Berlin).

MANET: AT PÈRE LATHUILE'S (1879)
VAN CUTSEN COLLECTION, BRUSSELS

MANET: BOATING (1874)
HAVEMEYER COLLECTION, NEW YORK

BOOK II

THE PILLARS OF MODERN PAINTING

RENOIR: LISE.

FOLKWANG MUSEUM, HAGEN, WESTPHALIA

GUSTAVE COURBET

THE threads that started from Millet have lured us further afield than the course of our history allows, and we have been drawn into a consideration of phenomena which, even if they owe most of all to Millet, would be inconceivable without a contribution from a phase of art-history hitherto neglected yet of the highest importance. Van Gogh appears as a Primitive after the manner of Millet, and his enthusiasm was reserved for Delacroix and Daumier. But we know that he served his apprenticeship to the Impressionists. Meunier seems a true adherent of the painter of the *Angelus*. But at the same time he was strongly influenced by the master who gave a new impulse to the art of his native Belgium : Courbet. We have willingly given precedence to Millet, for we are no longer in danger of passing for ungrateful recipients of his gifts. It is, therefore, necessary to recognise now, that his influence gave no stimulus and could give none, to the most important school of the nineteenth century. The conquering spirit of our modern painting derives from Courbet.

Not the art alone, but the whole being of this artist was conquest. There is nothing timid, childlike or good-natured about Courbet. He was the individualist with strong elbows. Corot accepted long obscurity as natural, Delacroix smiled disdainfully at it, Millet sighed over it. They lived with their art, they were the children of their Muse, and bad business men. Courbet defended himself tooth and nail. He made a way for himself with unexampled ruthlessness. He was the first "manager" of modern art. His pupil Whistler adopted his methods, but made them subtler and more modish.

Courbet divided his time into two halves, painting in one, and theorising in the other, and as a fact, he did the same thing in both, for his pictures were the documents of his teaching. He did not confine himself to art, but extended his system to all attainable fields, was a politician, and the first artist-cosmopolitan. His subtlety was his brutal boorishness. Nothing could have been better adapted for a new departure. In Paris this unpolished fanatic was like a bear in a nest of bees. He had to pay for his escapades. I think it was less triumphant detestation of his politics after the downfall of the Commune, than fury against his personal art that caused the disastrous prosecution over the Vendôme column, the last nail in the master's coffin.

Never was there a less Parisian painter. Turn and twist him as we will, we shall find all sorts of things in him, save only the typical French qualities. Nothing classic, nothing lyrical, nothing decorative after the manner of the great eighteenth-century landscape painters ; no trace of the playful charm of the Watteau school, nor of Delacroix' dramatic quality. Camille Lemonnier has drawn him as the antithesis of this latter in a brilliant essay.*

He describes Delacroix' enthusiasm, steeped in literature, impersonal in spite

* G. Courbet et son Œuvre, Paris, Lemerre, 1878.

of its heroism, calls him the Cid of painting, the conqueror of theatrical action, who substituted a drama that had become flaming colour for the scene-painting of the earlier masters, and beside this creator " à coups de cervelle " he shows us the absolutely unintellectual Courbet, the " grand peintre bête," who could not see why one should paint anything but what we feel beneath our feet, the painter of raw material. But Lemonnier was wrong in denying Courbet's greatness on this account, and only allowing him the merit of having sketched a formula, in ranking him below Millet, Rousseau, Corot, and even Daubigny, because he lacked humanity, in calling him " the brutaliser of painting," the " virtuoso of bestiality." Lemonnier was not alone in this injustice. A contemporary, H. d'Ideville, pronounced a like judgment the same year, and this was shortly after Courbet's death, when opinion had softened to some extent.*

Before this Courbet had been severely handled by the Parisian critics, perhaps more severely than any other painter. They could not forgive the ugliness of his models. Théophile Gautier declared he had never seen anything uglier in a Spanish slum.

In 1863 Bürger (Thoré) still expressed himself with more than reserve. Baudelaire, who had stood by him at first, became his bitterest foe. Silvestre, Castagnary and Champfleury were his first adherents, but they convinced no one. The most enthusiastic of the group, Proudhon, did him more harm than good.

Those who brought themselves to accept the artist, were repelled by the so-called stupidity of the man. This stupidity lay in his programme. His mistake was perhaps not so much the formula itself, as the proclamation of a programme of any sort. Theories sometimes yield good results in England and Germany, but never in France. Even had the formula been an intelligent one, the Frenchman is too cultured, or shall we say, too much of a blagueur, to admit of any such demonstration beyond the work itself. Every commentary, even the least plausible, makes him suspicious. On the other hand, the bourgeois in every country likes to make his own commentary. This, however, was Courbet's case : he was identified with a commentary that interested no one, that dealt with socialism and politics ; with an art that attracted no one. The others, too, had programmes, all of them without exception, from Poussin to Ingres and Delacroix. We have documents in plenty to prove this. But they did not talk of them to the public. They buried their theories in journals, allowed their pupils and correspondents to profit by them, but never advertised them. The innovation struck people as a monstrous immodesty ; and they were right. The manner in which Courbet talked to Silvestre about Titian and Leonardo, was revolting to all reasonable men. The formulation of a social theory as a system of æsthetics, which, as soon as it was examined solely from the social point of view, became absolutely puerile, and was only to be tolerated because Courbet had proclaimed it, excited laughter. But then, and this is the main point, the world overlooked the painter, the artist, and saw only his programme, his limitations as a thinker, and his glaring weaknesses as a man. It never occurred to any one that the one had nothing whatever to do with the other, that all Monsieur Courbet's theory was about as important to his art as his hat or his pipe. Finding the sauce unappetising, people pushed away the roast. They took his theory—the characteristic outpourings of an alcoholic—seriously, and forgot not only that he drank to excess, but that he painted. In the beginning

* G. Courbet, Notes et Documents sur sa Vie et son Œuvre, Paris, 1878.

COURBET: THE WOMAN AND THE WAVE
(LA FEMME À LA VAGUE)
PHOTOGRAPH DURAND-RUEL

Courbet never thought at all over his painting. He thought what he did good, and had every right to be proud of it. Peasant that he was, he would not wait for success, and took every means to press forward, even the most perverse. If Proudhon had assured him that his painting could cure the gout, it is probable that he would not have disclaimed the gift.

We should be obliged to repeat Zola, if we were to examine Proudhon's relation to Courbet. Everything there is to say about it is written in "Mes Haines." Proudhon's monstrous blasphemy, "Du Principe de l'Art et de sa Destination sociale" might have been fathered by a German. (Instead of Courbet the writer would have found a Böcklin or a Pre-Raphaelite, and both would have passed for great men to all time.)

The case in France, strange to say, was that the artist was a genius and the interpreter was blind, and that Zola was able to point out the under-estimation of which the idealist had been guilty. The arrogant Courbet, over whose manners well-bred people wrung their hands, was never more modest than when he gave himself up to the "Destination sociale" of his short-sighted friend.

His own theory at its best was not all nonsense. He wanted truth, more truth than his contemporaries offered. But which? The pictures are here to demonstrate, the demagogue vexes us no longer. Did he really ever paint "with a purpose?" I know one picture only which might be supposed to illustrate a theory, the *Aumône d'un Mendiant*, painted at the end of the sixties, in which a beggar gives a coin to a little boy; and even in this very uncharacteristic work the painting partly counteracts the painful impression. All the rest, from the first portrait of himself to the grandiose Stag-pictures and *The Wave* are pure art. The truth he saw was not the coarse Realism which flaunted in huge letters on the sign of the exhibition shed in 1855. "Faire de l'art vivant, tel est mon but!" he said in Castagnary's pompous preamble to the catalogue. This was what Courbet brought: a stronger life than any other of his time. And with it came the necessary, the useful. He discovered a new system of cells for art, a form of expression which contained that which man could use, and opened a directly accessible form to genius. It is true that his sense of superiority to his contemporaries verged on insolence. But this self-consciousness was not baseless. It did not rest upon Proudhon's illustration, nor upon his theory. It was the perfectly natural expression of an unapproachable superiority, the consciousness of a being, who felt his muscles to be stronger than those of his neighbours, and was better able to do what he desired to do than any one of them. He could not poetise, would not seek inspiration in the theatre, read even less than Millet, and wrote in the style of a grandiloquent provincial hair-dresser. But he was a painter. Corot made an appreciable approach to instinct, but remained a dreamer. Courbet got ten times nearer, and remained absolutely conscious. And if he expressed his consciousness of having hastened development by several generations in mad phrases, we must remember that in his essential and enduring speech, his painting, he advanced steadily, to the time when he painted his last great picture, and perhaps had more reason for pride than he himself supposed. He might certainly have advanced more tangible claims to importance than he did in the phrases of his pronunciamentos.

Courbet was born with all the animal instincts of the rustic. Strong, sensual, unfettered by a prejudice that did not rest on the most matter-of-fact consciousness of purpose. I, I and once more I. How shall I arrive at power, at enjoyment?

This was his gospel. He wanted to paint. He went to the galleries and looked for the masters who did this best. By painting he meant one special thing: the greatest, most direct effect to be won by brush and colour. He did not dream of spiritual things the while, did not translate or reflect, but grasped at the root of the matter. Generations may have deposited their knowledge of nature in him, peasants like himself, who thought only of the riches to be won from the earth, the material use of matter. Now he in his turn, fastens upon Hals and Zurbaran and Ribera, the great materialists, just as his forefathers found the right soil for their needs. The exclusiveness of his tendencies becomes his strength. Not one of his painting predecessors had been able to resist the Italians. This lay in their race, their culture. Italianism helped them, brought about the inter-play of kindred elements, introduced a lyrical and decorative strain, but weakened them, as all eclecticism weakens even the strongest. Courbet was the first Frenchman who turned laughing away from them. What he says about Raphael, is almost identical with the famous dictum of Velazquez. When, on the other hand, he makes use of the Spaniards and the Dutchmen, he does so after the manner of a peasant finding a good manure for his ground. Théophile Silvestre quotes the following: "J'ai traversé la tradition comme un bon nageur passerait une rivière; les académiciens s'y sont tous noyés." To these themselves he was as indifferent as to the Italians. How did they do it? interested him—not what did they think, what did they give their age? How they could be useful to him at the particular moment was the only thing in question. Thus his barbarism helped him, cutting everything away that might have been too much for his purely instinctive genius. Every trace of intellectuality would have weakened him, every spiritual accretion would have diminished his power. He had the intellect and the esprit most serviceable to Courbet, the painter-peasant. Of course, if he had not possessed genius, nothing would have come of it all. But the more he remained a peasant, so much the more was he a genius, that was his wisdom. "Savoir pour pouvoir!" was written in the famous preface to the catalogue of 1855. This peasant was by no means ignorant. But he had learnt with eyes, and hands, not with the brain. "C'est dans le doigt qu'est la finesse," he said to his doctor in Switzerland, laughing at his colleagues who were ruining themselves with expensive colours. As a painter, he was akin to Taine as a philosopher. "Penser, surtout penser vite est une fête. L'esprit y trouve une sorte de bal; jugez de quel empressement il s'y porte," * said Taine. He thought in an animal manner, just as Courbet painted in an animal manner. To paint, and above all, to paint quickly is a festival. And with this he laid his finger on the future. For if art was to preserve some remnant of a relation to life, painting could only be carried on henceforth with the rapidity which is in harmony with modern life. But whereas Taine in his haste dropped the most important things under the table, and suffered from his speed, because a cautious and comprehensive concentration is essential to philosophical thinking, Courbet's narrowness resulted in an incomparable forcefulness, which distinguishes all his masterpieces. And this forcefulness helps us over his defects.

This method, too, was art in the highest sense, or it would have had no result. It was here that Delacroix went astray in his estimate of Courbet. As Paul Flat has rightly said, "Imagination" and "Idealisation" were identical

* "Histoire de la Littérature anglaise," iii. p. 273 (new edition).

FRANS HALS: PORTRAIT OF WILLEM CROES

HAGUE MUSEUM

concepts to the painter of the *Dante's Boat*. The indispensable transformation of nature in his case was effected according to a schema very personally conceived, but nevertheless a heritage from the past, and derived from Rubens, the Rubens who was descended from Michelangelo. The influence exercised by Hals and Ribera upon Courbet is very different.

Delacroix' inheritance from his predecessors was combined with an intellectual permeation of the material by the help of much literature and of original thought. The manner of Hals took the artist back to Nature. Subjectively, of course, both stood in the same relation to their prototypes. The *Last Judgment* was to Delacroix very much what Hals' portraits or Rembrandt's women were to Courbet. For in Michelangelo's Christ he saw "neither a philosopher nor the hero of a romance;" he lauded the *Last Judgment* as a "feast of flesh." To Courbet in like manner the creations of his favourites appeared as flesh. But this fleshliness is a relative concept, which underwent emphatic modifications in the interval that divides Delacroix from Courbet. Courbet found enlargement of purpose in his methods and became freer and freer. On the other hand, we find Delacroix writing: "After all the new aberrations into which art may be seduced by caprice and thirst for novelty, the great style of the Florentine will always be the pole to which men will turn afresh to find the way back to all greatness and all beauty." He was mistaken here. Even a Michelangelo will only have a relative share in our modern history of development, great as our enthusiasm may be for him, great as the enthusiasm of all future art-loving generations must always be. And in painting this share is far more restricted than that of Rembrandt or Velazquez or Frans Hals, as we may now perceive after the generation or two since Delacroix. Fromentin's witty dictum concerning Poussin might be applied to Michelangelo and the whole of the Renaissance in relation to modern art: "On le consulte, on l'admire, on ne s'en sert pas." His value is above question, we are more alive to it to-day than was the generation of a hundred years ago, but we know that our relation to him must remain platonic, if we would not be led astray: Géricault's greatness rested on this knowledge, in which he was Delacroix' superior. He found a natural means of achieving, or at least of striving after, what Delacroix once set up as an ideal, an ideal that cannot be consciously realised: a combination of the manner of Velazquez with the manner of Michelangelo. Such combinations when deliberately attempted seem absurd, for the manner of the one excludes that of the other. But earlier, before the mind is conscious of its will, such an exquisite commingling may take place in the obscure motive forces of the artist, and for a moment it seemed to have been realised when Géricault, the creator of the *Radeau de la Méduse* painted his cavalry-men. Hence Delacroix' unbounded admiration for the predecessor, and his very sceptical attitude towards Millet. The Michelangelesque element in the peasant-painter, who was naïve enough to reveal the insufficiency of his literary knowledge to Delacroix, seemed to the latter "pretentious," *i.e.*, superficial, and reading between the lines we can see that with all his aversion from Courbet, he had more respect for him than for Millet. Millet had not thought out Michelangelo. But in Courbet, Delacroix recognised a logic intellectually narrow, but wholly fearless. Courbet's lack of all relation to classic art precluded any approximation of the two. Even Delacroix' brilliant intellect was unable to see that this was non-

* Preface to the "Journal."

essential; but he admired the vigour of the young artist in one of the first pictures by Courbet which came under his notice.*

He did not get beyond the subject at that time. The master to whom gesture was as important as colour, who painted with it, indeed, was bound to underestimate Courbet's first efforts, even if his esprit had not been repelled by the other's, even if the aristocrat had not recoiled before the proletarian. But his wisdom emerges triumphant even from this, the severest possible test that could have been imposed on his judgment, for we shall see that he recognised qualities in this new world, though they were not such as could suffice for him. That which really repelled Delacroix, Courbet's personal conduct, estranged many other delicately attuned lovers of art from the master of Ornans during his lifetime. If we in our turn, would not be misled, we must discriminate carefully, dismissing the hypothesis that there were two different elements in Courbet, his art and his humanity. When we speak of the human frailties of an artist and of his countervailing virtues, we mean no more than the obvious fact that in every personality, no matter how lofty, there are defects side by side with qualities. Wider knowledge will enable us to see that they are bound up together, and have a common origin, the natural disposition. The great artist is the great man. If this seems difficult to believe in the case of a Courbet, we must not forget that our doubts rest on no very solid foundations. For all that has come down to us concerning his personal misdeeds shows evidences of subjective colouring. The witnesses were in general enemies of his art and must be dismissed. At least we can no longer see the connection of all the details in such a manner as to decide the question of guilt. But the work of art lies before us, clear and distinct. And so the appearance of dualism is a harmless illusion, when we recognise that every art rests upon humanity; it is even stimulating, because it forces us to look away from all accidents, and fix our eyes on that which alone deserves higher consideration in the artistic being.

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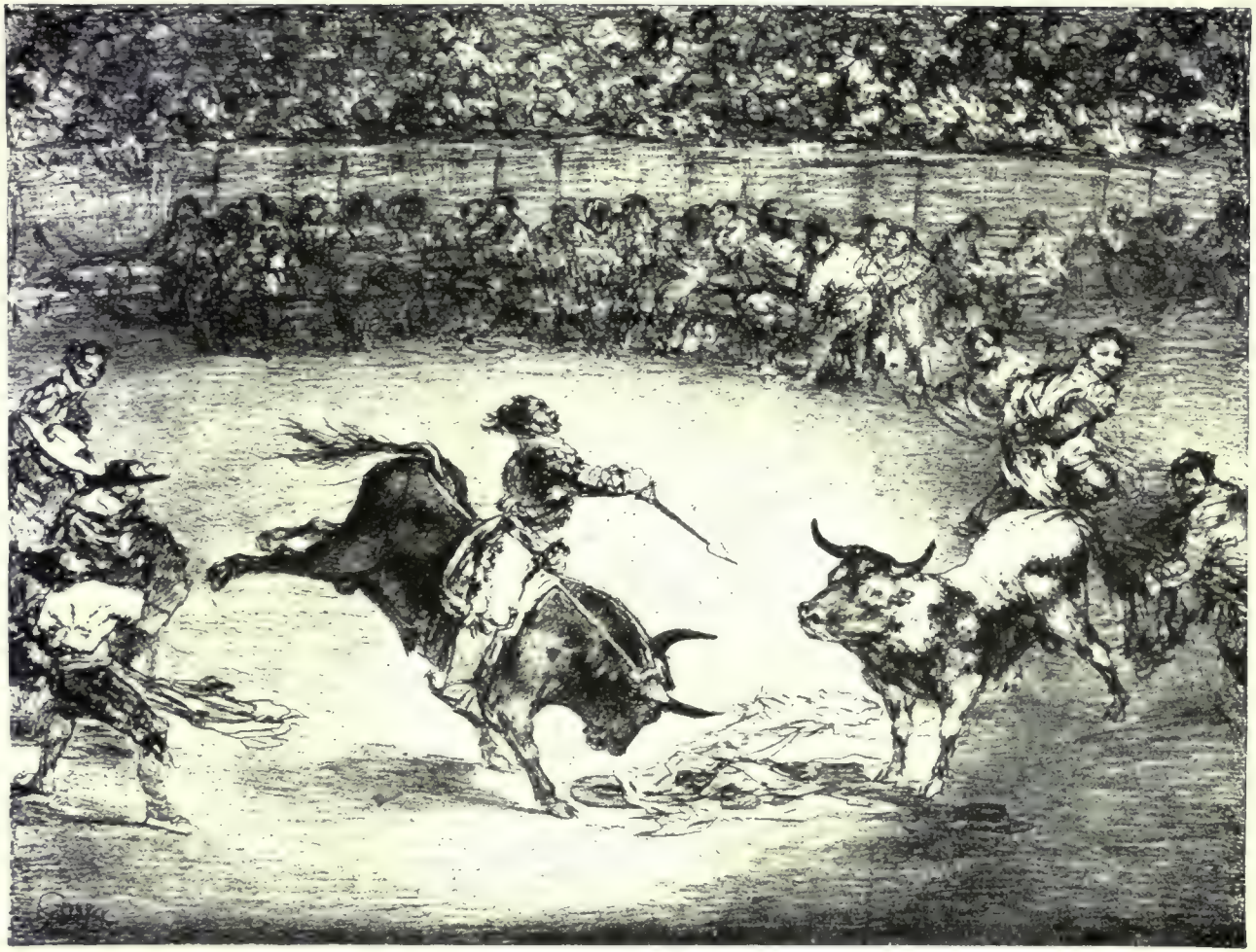
Courbet's evolution is a difficult problem. There is some truth in Duret's assertion that the master of Ornans never developed at all, because certain early defects are repeated in the latest pictures, that he may rather be said to have produced in a vegetable fashion, bringing forth good fruits one year and bad the next, without any obvious reason for the variation.†

The question at any rate is not to be solved by any such simple conception as that of pictorial evolution. Courbet had not one, but several developments. These intersect each other at every point, contradict each other apparently, and complicate the picture to such a degree, that it is easy enough to understand why no one has hitherto attempted to look for an organism in this connection. Even the artist's closest friends made glaring mistakes, and after 1882 Castagnary was guilty of serious errors in dating the works in the catalogue of the Courbet exhibition at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, because the master's evolution was not clear to him.‡

* The *Baigneuses* in the Salon of 1853. We must distinguish between Delacroix' hostility to realism as a theory, and his repulsion for Courbet. The one was boundless, the other strictly limited. Thus the sentence in the "Journal," i. p. 159, is directed against realism in general, and he certainly did not mean to put the unimportant German painter Denner whom he cites in this connection, on the same level as Courbet.

† Les Peintres français en 1867, par Théodore Duret (Paris: Dentu, 1867). We must not forget, however, that Courbet had not finished his course in 1867.

‡ He attributes *L'Homme blessé*, to the year 1854, whereas the picture had been refused at the Salon of 1844, as is indicated in the little note that precedes the catalogue. Estignard, again, is not



GOYA: EL FAMOSO AMERICANO, MARIANO CEBALLOS
LITHOGRAPH

Two things compete in Courbet to heighten expression: the plastic and the pictorial tendency. The one indicates a very great artist of the older style, who aims at plastic form, who therefore seeks to suppress all suggestion of his implement, and to paint as smoothly as possible. The other a great artist of the new style, relying more upon instinctive creation, and getting form out of the brush-stroke; a flat painter, the heir of Rubens, Rembrandt and Velazquez, a creator of material. Confusion arises from the fact that the period of the plastic tendency is not sharply defined. We find contemporary works of both kinds, and even the two tendencies in the same picture. Courbet the landscape painter is the purer artist, his nature manifested itself most spontaneously before Nature. His portraits of single figures belong to the same category. In each there is a steady augmentation of the purely pictorial charm. This development is occasionally interrupted by the painter of compositions, of genre and figure-pieces. Here the plastic tendency makes itself felt. It is characteristically covered by what may be termed the didactic in Courbet. As I have already insisted, this does not compromise the art —Courbet's socialism is a journalistic phrase—but adds purely formal elements thereto. The chief thread of the story is complicated thereby, and hence many pictures appear as steps in a transition. We shall see that the final result was the outcome of this.

This period of effort to obtain plastic effect lies therefore within the pictorial period. It comprises works so far apart chronologically as the *Cribleuses de Blé* of 1854 and the Proudhon portrait group of the year 1865. Here we have the reverse of the phenomenon we observe in David's, and still more in Ingres' portraits, which show more or less isolated pictorial tendencies in the midst of an evolution of plasticism.

In the beginning Courbet painted with the softest brush. The *Homme blessé* in the Louvre, the *Amants Heureux* of 1844–45, the *Homme à la Pipe* in the Montpellier Museum, and many other early works are handled with extreme tenderness. They recall Van Dyck, whom Courbet was copying at the time, and certain Delacroix closely akin to Rubens. The great Romanticist undoubtedly influenced him in his first period, as the copy of the *Dante's Boat* sufficiently shows. The same influence also appears in many a landscape. Delacroix' *Parc de Nohant* of the Cheramy collection, painted in 1842 or 1843, is strikingly like Courbet's wooded landscape of the same collection, in the flat treatment of the foliage. Delacroix, again, justified Courbet's so-called realism in a few isolated works or fragments. Pictures like the remarkable head of an old nun, painted about 1843, like the cat and the flower-piece—all in the Cheramy collection—or the corner of a studio in the Henri Rouart collection and other sketches of interiors and still-life pieces, are more sharply realistic—one might almost say precise—than the early Courbets.

In the succeeding years, the soft painting gradually became more tense, a modification in which Courbet was helped by the master who had more influence upon him than any other contemporary: Géricault. The magnificent portrait by Géricault in the Salle des Portraits of the Louvre, said to be his own portrait,

very trustworthy. He dates the two copies after Hals and Rembrandt (painted in 1869), 1842, the *Homme à la Ceinture de Cuir*, 1844, &c. Even the most important dates are questionable. Thus the Louvre catalogue gives 1851 for the *Enterrement*, whereas all the biographers agree (rightly) in assigning it to the Salon of 1850.

and the *Homme à la Ceinture de Cuir* of 1849, the best of Courbet's early portraits, are closely allied. They have the same generosity not merely of pose but of conception, a nobility in what is shown and in how it is shown, by which we should recognise a portrait of the artist himself, even if he had painted another person. All that has been written about Courbet's roughness and stupidity is discounted by this picture. We shall see if he deserved the reproach later on ; at the time of his glorious portrait of himself he was, what every artist must be in his art, a patrician. Géricault's portrait is still more subjective than Courbet's. The white, cloudy background makes a simple, vigourous harmony with the dun tone of the figure ; the format, too, is more favourable, the width is pleasant to the eye. The superbly modelled hands give greater elasticity to the Courbet. But here, too, the greater precision is modified by the splendid dark general tone.

In later portraits, such as the black *Rochefort*, the same soft dark modelling achieves perfect miracles of portraiture.

Still more obvious is the relation to Géricault's better-known manner, to the creator of the magnificent *Carabinier* in the Louvre, &c., to the pictures in which the brush swept the surface with vigourous strokes, no longer relying upon a veil of tone to create harmonies. This relation manifests itself in the later Courbet. But we have first to consider his middle period, the most remarkable, when he produced the works with which his name will be written in history for all time.

The pictures of 1850 must have had the effect of a bursting shell. Even now the impression they make is astounding. In the passage-room of the Louvre, where the *Enterrement* languishes ignominiously, one squeezes oneself flat against the opposite wall, to get at a suitable distance, not so much from the huge canvas with its fifty life-size figures, or the gigantic landscape, whose line of gray rock encloses the background like a natural circus, but rather from the portentous vigour of expression. It is a Resurrection rather than a Burial, and this is true in several senses. Here, for the first time since the seventeenth century, we have a portrait-group equal to the best pictures of Hals and Rembrandt in the same genre, and like these, rich in psychological suggestions, the sum of which is nevertheless far above mere personal expression. Secondly, an art equal to that of the great painters of the past comes to life again here, with all the charm of the early masters, though its masterly gravity repels the facile admiration of the amateur. Even when the *Enterrement* was painted, there were more modern pictures, by which I mean works which more clearly presage the characteristics of the Impressionists, and Courbet soon afterwards painted a considerable number of such himself, which had a more far-reaching influence. But there is not one of the whole century which reveals the same powerful mastery of the old artistic methods and makes such a dignified effect by its highly individual treatment of inherited assets. Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* and the *Massacre of Scio* are its predecessors, not relatives, but partners. Throughout the rest of the century, the only painter who approaches Courbet at all as a painter of such representative pictures is Manet. Even in this extremely limited series, the *Enterrement* takes a prominent position. It lacks the special charm of Géricault and Delacroix, for it is without any sort of relation to the classic element of French art, nor has it the special beauty of the later men, for modern colour was denied it. But whereas the others paid for this charm by a loss, a certain sketchiness, which, unimportant as it may seem to us, gives them a touch of decadence as compared with the old masters, the *Enterrement* within certain

GOYA: THE DANCE, DESIGN FOR TAPESTRY

TORRECILLA COLLECTION, MADRID

time-limits appears as a work of unrivalled mastery, a piece of painting unique in our age.

What had happened to Courbet when he began the gigantic work we can only guess, in the absence of any biography of the slightest discrimination. Before this as we have seen, he was following after Van Dyck. The Spaniards, of whom he always spoke with enthusiasm,* must have seemed a sudden revelation to him; his admiration was not confined to Velazquez; the great portrait painter's long neglected friend, Zurbaran, made a still more penetrating appeal to him. Into the landscape of the *Enterrement*, especially the wonderfully veiled farm-buildings on the left, the Velazquez of the *Riding School*, the *Boar-Hunt* and kindred works has been transported almost unaltered. In the figures, on the other hand, Spanish and northern elements are marvellously blended, yet the Spanish colourist ousts the Spanish tone-painter. It might be supposed that Courbet had seen Zurbaran's four episodes from the life of St. Bonaventura, which hung together in Soult's collection till the fifties; two are now in the Louvre, and one in the Dresden and Berlin galleries respectively. The two examples in the English National Gallery were also at the time in Louis Philippe's collection in the Louvre. But the example Courbet had studied most closely was obviously the finest work by Zurbaran in our latitudes, the *Obsequies of a Bishop* in the Louvre. The similarity of many details, and these the most admirable, is apparent at a glance, especially on the left side of the *Enterrement*. The bright-eyed chorister in the foreground, in a white surplice, with a red cap on his raven hair, is, as painting, identical with the youth who stands at the Bishop's head in the Zurbaran. It is a proclamatory splendour of the same order as that which distinguishes the Spanish colourist from his more reticent compatriot, marked by a harmony which comes less from the rarity of the colour, than from the extraordinary balance of the unmixed black, white, and red, and the yellow of the censer, and showing a cool brilliance that moves us like the glance of great, shadow-circled eyes. At the same time, Courbet did not forget the Caravaggesque element in Zurbaran.† The wide, white linen bands of the coffin-bearers, whose dignified figures enclose the picture on the left, gleam like the faces in the works of the Italian.

This unabashed exploitation of the Spaniards distinguishes Courbet from the school of Barbizon, and makes him seem like a man of a different race. We cannot credit him with the discovery of Spain, for Daumier had cast a glance into the art of which Goya was the final expression, and it seems to me probable that Goya's sojourn in France had a certain influence upon French art, in spite of the distance between Paris and Bordeaux. Géricault was familiar with Goya's pictures; Delacroix had a work by the painter of the Maja in his studio in the twenties, and often spoke of him with enthusiasm. But all these relations do not go beyond slight shades. Courbet gave the determining impulse, when he brought about a new and rich development by the resolute appropriation of the Spaniards.

From such traits in history we recognise the narrowness of the usual conception

* In the conversation with Silvestre, already quoted, he said: "Ribera, Zurbaran et surtout Velazquez, je les admire: Ostade et Craesbeeck me séduisent entre tous les Hollandais et je vénère Holbein."

† Muther has drawn attention to the affinities of Courbet and Caravaggio (Geschichte der Malerei im 19. Jahrhundert, ii. pp. 438, 449).

of personality. Without the Spaniards, Courbet, the revolutionary, in whom his contemporaries saw only the iconoclast, and even the enemy of art, would be unimaginable, and the achievement of the Impressionists who derive from Courbet, impossible. His indebtedness, so far from minimising his personality, revealed its value. It made of him just what his own time overlooked in its preoccupation with his realism, the highly objective artist. Of course he did not stop short at the discovery. He conquered in order to possess. To possess the one thing, he added others thereto. Not arbitrarily, he found just the amalgam he could use. He did not draw it all out of his own possession, but reached out after the heritage of the past until he had created a new unity.

Herein lies the progress which Duret failed to recognise. This is the fashion in which all art assets originate. We need but note how the Spanish element in Courbet, which appears in relative isolation in the *Enterrement*, is gradually concentrated into a more and more organic, not to say personal method, and we shall find the art-history of his whole life.

With this Spanish element he blended the energy of Frans Hals. The combination is not more striking than the similarity between the young man with the plumed cap in Caravaggio's famous gambling scene at Dresden, and certain loosely painted heads by the Haarlem master. The relation to Hals is freer than that to the Spaniards. We might call the spirit of the whole group in the *Enterrement* Hals-like, the sturdy life of the personages, the elemental vigour of their faces, the reality with which it is all painted, and even the exaggerated use of black, which, just as in certain examples of Hals seeks in vain to kill the energy of the drawing. Every head is a portrait, and not only every head, every figure, every one of the manifold attitudes. Even in later life Courbet rarely excelled the art of the *Enterrement* as portraiture. Duret's head of Corbinaud of 1863, and many portraits of the sixties, show the same veil of reddish tones over the material, the mirror-like smoothness of which almost invites the hand to stroke it, and the same uncompromising truth of presentment. This was decried as realism by contemporaries, who declaimed against the ugliness of truth. The painter's few friends, Champfleury, for instance, whom he immortalised in the masterly Louvre portrait of 1854, were content to defend realism. They put the blame on the artist's models, on the universal and individual ugliness of the world, for which an honest painter was not to be held responsible; *i.e.*, they were guilty of an assumption arbitrary as, or even more arbitrary than, that of their opponents. No one recognised art in this fidelity to nature; no one took up a position at the right distance from the picture to receive an impression of unity from the colossal planes. The fault of which Courbet was accused, the limitation of his conception to the details of nature presented to the eye, was committed by every spectator who exhausted himself in picking out the discords from the whole. People forgot that an orchestra so vast required strong motives to give it animation, and that even caricature, no matter how biting, contributes to the enrichment of material. They overlooked the chief thing: style.

The formation of Courbet's style began in his early period and ended with his last important works. It is not only vital to his own history, but of immense weight in modern painting generally. It does not consist of the modification of details, but of the progressive alteration of his whole conception, and consequently of all his methods. The *Funeral at Ornans* is one of the first stages on this very devious road. His style lies less in the extraordinary variety of elements than in

GOYA: CHARLOTTE CORDAY

PHOTOGRAPH DURAND-RUEL

their summary use, as, for instance, in the distribution of the whole group, which, realistic as it seems, has so arranged the numerous faces as to present the greatest possible variety, thus forming an impressive, though non-demonstrable rhythm. Hals had already proved the possibility of such an achievement in his large shooting-pieces. The colour above all makes for style. Here Courbet parts company with Zurbaran, who was thinking primarily of splendour, when he seemed to give increased breadth to the great planes of his Louvre picture by his colour. Courbet contracts his. The whole picture is built up of the main contrast of black and red against the Velazquez-like background. The red is liquid as blood. It streams from the carnations and hovers over the black figures like a symbol of life over the grave. For it emphasises the psychological motive of the picture, the contrast between the sorrow of the mourners and the vivacity of their faces. This vivacity is enhanced by the red, but at the same time the monumental rather than the dramatic element is increased. The red tones, equally distributed over the faces, soften the vivid physiognomical details, obviate a genre-like appearance, and reserve the movement for the animation of the planes. It is most pronounced in the two precentors behind the kneeling sexton. Their alcoholic visages under their singular coxcomb-hued head-dresses warm the whole picture.

Time, as in the case of all Courbets and all old masters, has refined the colour and contributed not a little to the general effect. In the right-hand portion the black has suffered. We must imagine the group of women as rich, relatively, as the garde-champêtre who stands before them, in a gray coat over a reddish waistcoat, orange knee-breeches and grayish-blue stockings. The dark olive tones of the women's dresses have all become black. The Louvre would be well advised to bring them out again.

It may be urged against the *Funeral at Ornans* that, in common with all the large representative pictures of the nineteenth century, it is comparatively non-representative of its author. The unparalleled impression it made upon the public and on the painter's colleagues was due to its subject. The audacity of representing a real funeral, not with sentimental poses, but with the fixed and idiotic expression of faces on such occasions, and further with portraits of utterly indifferent people, exceeded the far greater audacity of giving such momentary representations by the help of the old masters. The charge of ignorant folly might have been transmuted into condemnation of the all too wise eclectic; but the one would have been no less unjust than the other, and such a point of view, if logical, would have also depreciated the most exalted works of contemporaries. The little Christ in the Garden of Olives reveals more of Delacroix' characteristic mastery than the *Massacre of Scio;* the *Carabinier* means more for Géricault than the *Raft of the Medusa;* and a bunch of flowers of Manet's last period is more individual than his *Olympia.* But what we call representative entails the suppression of individuality, in favour of a multiplicity valuable to the representation. We see more in it than a phase of the artist's development. Such pictures create the standard for a whole epoch; the standard, not only for a degree of artistic expression, but for the generosity, the passion, the morality of a period. In such moments art apparently re-conquers the right to speak to the people, and the lover of art also finds a quiet joy in the beauty of this thought.

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The *Funeral at Ornans* is not Courbet's largest picture; the *Combat de Cerfs* is bigger, and the *Atelier*, with its three and a half by six metres, was the

largest of all. These works are not isolated examples. There are dozens of similar dimensions, if not quite as extensive as the three above-named. A comparatively large surface was natural to the master.

This tendency distinguishes Courbet from his contemporaries after Delacroix, and was in itself a cause of distrust to the enemies of his realism. It is one reason of his unpopularity. The French collector likes a picture he can handle, and the stands of the dealers in the Rue Lafitte are made for works of modest dimensions.

He who would work with life-size figures and animate large surfaces must of necessity become a monumental artist. The *Funeral at Ornans* was indeed the solution of a monumental problem, one of the many successfully attempted by the master. A common impulse of great energy informs the long line of figures. In the *Stone-breakers* of the same Salon, now in the Dresden Gallery, Courbet brought this impulse into a concentrated form of smaller extent, and showed with what variety he proposed to treat his monumental themes.

Everything depends upon this. Style is like minted metal. One has his pocket full of big bronze coins; the weight is considerable, his pocket gapes. Another carries the same number of coins in gold, and steps out lightly with a treasure a thousand times more precious. Artistically, we are living in the sign of the copper-standard. Plenty of cash, but little value. The few gold pieces disappear under the heap of small change. It is all style. The one rattles as bravely as the other in the pocket, nay, the pence make the most noise. Courbet's fall is due to the anomaly, that he filled his pockets with gold pieces and went about with them as if they were so much copper. No wonder that people thereupon took him for a coiner.

Would it have been so very difficult to make an easily legible style out of the form of the *Stone-breakers?* Any foreman in a furniture-shop can do it now. Was it more difficult then? The Englishmen, from whom ingenious critics have traced Courbet's artistic descent, showed the contrary. A more dexterous craftsman would, for instance, have set the lad who is carrying away the stones in a more schematic relation to the breaker, perhaps even parallel; he might conceivably have placed three other workers in appropriate attitudes beside them, and then have congratulated himself on having surpassed the Æginetan marbles. Courbet painted his figures as strongly as possible, but he showed that he was concerned not with lines but surface, and not only with surface but with an effect of depth. And this was in no sense an idée fixe with him, but sprang from his desire for richness, for greater power—and from his consciousness of being able to make his effects on these lines. Millet was more modest. The reverence we feel for him does not prevent us from seeing in him an easier manner of writing, well adapted to his personality, and not less sincere, of great charm but not of equal strength. He never painted so powerfully as Courbet painted in that picture which was so closely akin to the Millet world of form. We may assume that Courbet watched the early development of Millet with interest. Although Millet was his senior by five years they started almost simultaneously. Courbet's first landscapes were painted in 1841. The things Millet had done before this date are negligible. Indeed, if we take his first important picture as the starting-point, Courbet was the earlier of the two, for when he was painting his first portraits, Millet exhibited his *Laitière* at the Salon, the work Bürger welcomed as "une jolie esquisse dans le goût de Boucher." The *Stone-breakers* made its appearance after Millet's *Vanneur* of 1848, and simultaneously with his *Semeur* of

1850. Even if Courbet received some purely superficial stimulus from these pictures, there is absolutely no basis for the indebtedness to Millet assumed by writers upon art. We might as reasonably, nay, more reasonably, assume that Millet was influenced by Courbet when, in the Cherbourg sea-pieces of the war year, he made an incursion into the domain of his junior.

For in reality there is no more likeness between the pictures of the two masters then there is between any two persons we might meet in the same room. I have spoken of Millet's relation to Daumier and of his classic origin in another place. He was truly a painter with a purpose, in contrast to Courbet, on whose purpose all the world, himself included, was for ever insisting; he expressed his tendency to synthesis with the utmost decision, and made it his goal in all his works from the *Vanneur* onwards. Courbet's synthesis is only evident now that we can survey the whole man and his following, all of which he himself was unconscious. It was as strong a motive force in him as in Millet, nay, stronger, but it remained instinctive, and this is why it was so mighty—and so clumsy. In Millet more limited gifts came to the help of a more harmonious personality. Courbet was driven hither and thither by an unbridled temperament, among others to the point where Millet stood, but it was only one side among many, and he controlled it as he controlled all others. Millet was always the same; he tottered when he left his narrow path. He carried over a fine formula to a variety of things; his pictures are differentiated more by symbol than by the pictorial method which he took from the old masters, and reduced, without developing it further. He is therefore monumental in a far more conventional sense than his compatriot, in an essentially weaker sense, quantitatively as well as qualitatively, we must add. Never did he attempt to transpose the exquisite art of his small pictures into larger dimensions without serious loss. The *Angelus* is inferior to any average Courbet, and Millet's most important essay in monumental effect, the *Hagar and Ishmael* in the Mesdag Museum at the Hague, is a complete failure. In this, as in many other pictures of Millet's, the essential element, a mastery of pictorial expression, is lacking. This explains why Millet was able to express a great part of his nature by draughtsmanship, whereas Courbet without a brush and colour would have been like a man without limbs. The most brilliant charcoal drawing could give no idea of the *Stone-breakers* or the *Funeral at Ornans*, to say nothing of later works. They are only possible as paintings.

This difference might have been purely technical; Millet might have been as great a draughtsman as was Courbet a painter. But justice towards our two masters demands that we should recognise the difference of potentiality. Style in Millet, whether evolved by brush or pencil, was firmer than Millet himself, and herein lies his limitation. The artist kept nothing over save a one-sided form, which expressed his nature well, but at the same time showed its narrow boundaries, since he could not keep this form fluid, *i.e.*, capable of expansion. He has finished when he first gets the form suitable to him, and afterwards plays the part of artisan rather than of genius to his invention. Courbet, on the other hand, is not to be identified with any one work. He invents until he lays down the brush. In other words, the difference between Millet and Courbet is that between genius and talent, even if we must admit that Millet fulfils the conception of talent in superabundant measure, and that Courbet falls short in some respects of the standard of genius. Millet sought to supply the deficiency by a very distinguished treatment of a literary tendency, and this has drawn a whole herd

of sentimental adherents and imitators to him since his death. The few great artists who further developed the imperishable part of Millet disappear in the multitude. Here again, without depreciating Millet's greatness, we can easily see that insistence on the element of thought was expedient to help out artistic weakness. Courbet has been unjustly condemned for his renunciation of all such aid.

Millet brought strong lines into the atmosphere of the Dutchmen and Spaniards; Courbet essayed to set plastic bodies therein, *i.e.*, to combine the results of the old art with those of the new. His vehemence in the process made it inevitable that he should light upon impossible tasks. Herein lies the problematic quality of his art. As a landscape painter he was pre-eminently a painter of planes, identifying himself at first with Velazquez, giving ever-increasing vigour to tone and colour, and painting with a temperament unrestrained by reflection, just as Hals painted his personages: only material, only brush and colour, only surface. But this did not suffice him. His rhetoric demanded a personification—not that of genre, he was too deeply imbued with the old masters and too honest for that; but at least the significant presence of man and beast in the landscape. As from his youth up he had confronted man as a realistic portrait painter, a difference arose all the more readily in the combination of the two domains, in that the two materials are not found conjoined in Nature in the manner that seemed suitable to him. This difference does not make itself felt in the *Funeral* and the *Stone-breakers*. In each he had a happy inspiration; size and colour came to his aid, while the solution was hastened perhaps unduly by the intermediary black. Courbet recognised the devastating quality of asphaltum, and was too strongly averse to all compromise to content himself with such expedients. But as soon as he attempted to substitute more solid colours, or essayed to make the shadows effective, the problem presented itself in all its intensity. This happened, as we see plainly enough, in the following year, 1851, with the *Demoiselles du Village*. Here Courbet painted the figures and the landscape, each unsurpassable in its way, quite independently the one of the other. The landscape would be a masterpiece in itself without the figures; the three charming female figures with the little shepherdess would be an exquisite group without the landscape. The two in one frame have the effect of a picture by two different hands.

That this was Courbet's method we know from no less a witness than Delacroix, who subjected the *Baigneuses* of the Salon of 1853 to a severe but not undeserved criticism.* He was repelled not only by the lack of psychological relation between the two naked figures, by the fact that "the gesture expressed nothing," but by the non-pictorial connection between the figures and their surroundings. Delacroix justified his criticism by the declaration that he had seen the sketch for the landscape in Courbet's studio. This he found enlarged in the picture, and the two bathing women had been put into it, a proceeding which is even more crudely obvious here than in the *Demoiselles de Village*. To Delacroix, the creator of the most fluid kind of painting, this was peculiarly abhorrent. He pronounced a like unfavourable judgment upon the *Lutteurs* and the *Fileuse* of the same Salon. He thought the background killed the two figures of the former, and that over

* "Journal," ii. p. 159. In a foot-note he calls this picture *Demoiselles de Village*, a title chosen by Courbet for the Catalogue, and still often used to distinguish the picture, now in the Montpellier Museum. It must not be confounded with the *Demoiselles de Village faisant l'aumône à une Gardienne de Vaches*, of 1851, the work here reproduced.

GUSTAVE COURBET: THE LADIES OF THE VILLAGE (1851)

DURAND-RUEL, NEW-YORK

3 ft. might have been cut away round them. He bestowed warm praise on the distaff and the sleeping figure, but censured the heaviness of the dress and of the chair. This last criticism seems to us exaggerated when we stand before the gem of the Montpellier Museum. Time has perhaps softened the contrasts to which Delacroix was so sensitive. It seems strange, however, that Delacroix should have been blind to the close relation of these particular pictures to his own works. Or was it that he did not wish to see it? In 1852, a year before the *Baigneuses*, Delacroix had painted his *Lever*,* the interior with the naked woman binding up her heavy tresses before a mirror. It contains much of the younger master's flesh-painting, but is more fused, and therefore more harmonious, the work of a riper artist, who, for all his skill, never lost sight of his end. Paul Mantz said of Delacroix that "il voyait son tableau avant de le peindre." We might say the opposite of many pictures of Courbet's middle period, the *Baigneuses* among them. Courbet was inspired by an absolutely unconscious instinct, or, to be more exact, purely by an impression of nature, and was only absolutely conscious in the impulse to reproduce this impression. The faster he painted the more slowly did his thought follow, and what this added was, as a rule, opposed to the creation of the instinct. Yet it would seem that Courbet's development required this partitioning of the picture to take in all that was typical of the artist and more especially that which differentiated him and Delacroix. Beneath the fragmentary conception which is in such striking contrast to the organic method of the painter of *Dante's Boat* the necessities of a new synthesis lie hidden.

We learn from this how inadequate is language for the formulation of the laws of art. Expressed in words, they seem to deal eternally with the reception and the rejection of the same ideas; the degree, on which everything depends, only becomes intelligible through the name of the artist who accomplishes it. In these days, when perspective is taught in the secondary schools, and every water-colour painter can grapple with its most complicated problems, how little is conveyed by such a phrase as that Courbet was a master of perspective! But how significant it becomes when we stand before the *Cribleuses de Blé* in the Nantes Museum, Courbet's masterpiece of 1854. We should like to have had Delacroix' opinion of this remarkable interior, and to know what Ingres thought of it. At the Exhibition of 1900 people stood before it as before a riddle, and so, no doubt, they did at the Exhibition of 1855. Courbet scarcely went farther than this in the direction of plasticity, and before this picture it is easy to understand that the painter would some day try his hand at sculpture. It is plastic without being classic, a phenomenon unknown in France, save in the case of the Primitives, until we come to Courbet. It has something of the grand old stylelessness of the North, in which all seems nature and nothing convention, and a ruthless sincerity is the sole form. The room is almost without atmosphere, it is filled with forms only, but these are rendered with such mastery that their apparently arbitrary position fixes every corner of the room in all dimension. The kneeling girl who shakes the sieve—About called her indecent—is as much a miracle of foreshortening as one of Michelangelo's Sibyls in a different order of things. There is no question of a pictorial relation of the details; the boy who is looking into the corn-bin is a creation, almost a work of art, in himself. In the group of the two girls an almost indescribable richness of arabesque is

* In the Auguste Vacquerie collection.

produced by the forms; an arabesque of modelling in contrast to the linear arabesque of the old masters. And here again, as in the *Funeral*, colour acts as a secret amalgam to the unrelated masses; but the black of the early work has made way for an exquisite pale gold, with which the grey and pink of the dresses harmonise as perfectly as if Velazquez had breathed his spirit into this almost prodigal realism.

The same spirit works its magic still more manifestly in the huge picture of 1855. The *Atelier* is a kind of resting-place in the ascent, a pause in which the artist collects his thoughts. The five years that separate the *Funeral* and the *Atelier* do not constitute a decisive epoch, the strongest phase of development begins later. Who, indeed, could have found the right path unhesitatingly amidst this chaos of gigantic projects, begun in one year, broken off in the next, taken up again ten years later, and yet producing masterpieces every time they appeared. It seems, almost as if Courbet had struggled against his own development in order not to sacrifice that portion of his mastery, which had to give way to some other. In many contemporary pictures heterogeneous conceptions are perceptible. Immediately after the *Cribleuses*, the strongest argument for plasticity in all his art, he painted the softest, the most rich-toned of his works, the recapitulation of everything with which the descendant of the Spaniards was occupied. He expressed this after his own fashion by adding to the title in the catalogue the pompous phrase: "allégorie réelle, determinant une phase de sept années de ma vie artistique," an absolute truth, for in the *Atelier* we have really the artistic quintessence of a part of his nature and his life. The grotesqueness lay only herein, that it was the author himself who formulated the fact. Of course the public laughed, and the critics laid hold of the allegory and believed, rightly or wrongly, that Courbet had used it to proclaim his Socialism afresh, because he had grouped round his easel all kinds of contemporaries with whom he had relations, and various class-types, which, indeed, he had painted elsewhere.*

To-day the significance of these persons and things has evaporated; we are scarcely impressed even by the brilliant characterisation of the portraits. What we see is a magnificent piece of decoration.

Of all Courbet's works the *Atelier* is the one most akin to Velazquez. It is an offering to the manes of the great Spaniard of the utmost dignity, for it entails no sacrifice of individuality. Velazquez is not used as a cliché, there is nothing subservient, nothing he himself would have disdained. One master offers homage to another, and honours both himself and his predecessor in the act.

The *Atelier* is the lyrical pendant to the *Enterrement;* it is all sunny grace and loveliness, just as the other was all dark and weighty earnest. It is constructed more lightly, more loosely; the oppressive façade of the *Funeral* is replaced by a half circle extending far into the background. Where the colossal line of rocks extends in the latter, the studio-walls, of the same Velazquez-tone as the other background, with the effective patches made by the pictures, encloses the scene. The centre of the composition is the painter in a dark gray jacket, his fine profile relieved against the beautiful work on the easel—a brown wooded landscape with a blue sky, closely related to the exquisitely outlined naked model, whose carnations,

* Courbet himself wrote to a friend concerning his picture: "Le sujet de mon tableau est si long à expliquer que je veux te le laisser deviner quand tu le verras, c'est l'histoire de mon atelier, ce qui s'y passe moralement et physiquement, c'est passablement mystérieux, divinera qui pourra." L'Art, 1883.

naturalistically treated in reddish gray tones, shed a mild radiance throughout the picture. The boy to the left of the artist is the most animated passage, a concentrated gray with luminous carnations, a reminiscence of the delicious choir-boy in the *Enterrement*, but of a warmer simpler nature. The stuff on the floor beside the naked model produces the pink Velazquez-tone. From this rich centre the colour dies away into all the corners of the great room. It is the method used by Velazquez in his portraits of the Infanta, monumentally applied. What the face is in the Spaniard's portraits, the central group is here; the fantastic coiffure answers to the tendril-like offshoots formed by the grotesque subordinate figures, and even in the darkness forms and faces seem to be moving. Courbet did not take advantage of the complaisant shadow to which Velazquez gave such charm, that many of his disciples of to-day are content to paint the nimbus without the body from which it radiates. His touch is always granulated, he does not simulate form but paints it. His unresting skill created a decorative detail in the drapery of the marvellous female figure on the extreme right, which recalls the ornamentation on the stuffs of the Flemish masters. Rather than compromise he preferred to sacrifice unity. Where others, after exerting themselves richly would be content to indicate the limits of the pictures by a few strokes, Courbet paints realistic portraits.

In the Defossés collection this picture enjoys a privilege rarely accorded to our pictorial art. The enthusiasm of the collector has moved him to a princely deed. He has devoted a whole room to the work, a vast interior lighted from above, finely proportioned and gorgeously fitted. Heavy gilded architecture alternates with panels of Gobelin tapestry, which accustom the eye to a gray-blue basis. At the upper end of the room, extending across the whole width, the picture is enframed in massive gilded pilasters. The effect is highly impressive. It affords a proof, unique of its kind, that this much despised realism, the value of whose existence has been at times limited to unessential verities, may compete with the greatest art that has decorated churches and palaces; that there are not two arts, monumental and non-monumental, but only one, the art of beauty. No Primitive could make a finer effect here. Imagine Botticelli's *Spring* in its original place, or the altar-piece of an old Rhenish master. The effect would, no doubt, be stronger, by virtue of the more visible expression of architectonic lines, and the more surprising the less the spectator could find himself again in these lines. But it cannot be accounted a defect in the modern work that it should lack strangeness. Every really vital person will consider this an advantage. And that the power seems less here is due to our inclination for that strangeness, and the impatience of the first moment, which resists the quieter effects. This room gave me an immovable confidence in our art and confirmed my secret repulsion to everything which does not spring from the natural instinct of a personality. I should have greeted the Botticelli reverentially, but should have thought it less at home here than in the Florentine Academy. I could perhaps have given warmer welcome to the wonderful *Last Supper* from San Salvi, whose harmonies are more attuned to our own, but even the del Sarto could not have appealed to me so intimately then as Courbet's profane work. When I last saw the *Atelier* I had just come from the Primitives at Düsseldorf, and was about to visit the Sienese. Our agitated existence provides us with sensations of which our grandfathers in post-chaises never dreamt. The antithesis was almost unbearable when, before the rose and pale gold of the modern, I recalled the lurid altar-piece of the old painter

of the Lower Rhine, one of the wild and grandiose masters, who fascinated us at the Düsseldorf Exhibition.

Before the *Atelier* our thoughts turn gratefully to Rubens and Rembrandt. Between us and these two there are centuries also, and yet they are incomparably nearer to us than the Primitives. In another three hundred years, when the space of time has doubled, and the chronological difference between Velazquez and his predecessors seems to have diminished correspondingly, Velazquez and the others will not have become more remote to the painters of the day. Nay, for all time, as long as painting is practised, these men will be held to belong not to a time but to art, just as we already reckon the great Greeks.

What is the reason of this conception, which is too mighty, too rich in hundreds of confirmatory symptoms to be purely imaginary ?

The conditions for research in art-history are never so favourable as when we stand before an extraordinary picture. We think with the eye, testing rapidly; it is as if such an impression rouses everything that tells for and against it. The keenness with which we grasp the work before us serves us for comprehension of those that are absent, since it is not vision alone that opens art to us, but that clairvoyant condition, akin to creation, in which our vivified experience is reinforced by a thousand memories.

We get nearer to the reason if we carefully examine the various effects which all sorts of typical works make upon us at such moments. The Rhenish or Westphalian master at Düsseldorf struck our souls to earth with his terrific grotesques. We could not at the moment have rejoiced in the warm modelling of Courbet's naked figure. Cognition was in an abnormal state, as if brutalised by a sudden almost animal instinct. I remember that the delicate complexion of the lady with whom I was standing before the picture, distressed my eye, and that I longed for something even more violent than the painter had given us. It was not a bad picture, but one highly esteemed by experts and belauded by æsthetes; the effect it had upon me, 500 years after it was painted, bears witness to its power. But it worked upon other and lesser emotions than the Courbet. The latter was like some great human countenance of my own time. It did not drive me away from to-day, but brought me nearer to it, brought me nearer to myself, showed me things in myself which seemed to me necessary, legitimised me and my instinct. The Primitive led me aside. It was not his subject-matter that repelled me, but his manner of treating it, the wild fervour that seared and scarred, the deep humiliation, not of his martyr but of his own soul, the mocking laughter, not of his tormentors but of his own conception. It was not his legend, but the insistence with which he presented it that repelled me. He appealed to dim eyes, painting as if I were callous, as if it were necessary for him to make manifold mechanical repetition of what I saw at the first glance. It was always the same, a dark event which confronted me, immovable, immutable, and held my eyes captive with the fixity of its compelling gaze.

Men prayed before pictures such as these. Terror brought them to God. And even now they affect us somewhat in the same manner. An unconscious simulated petition creeps into enjoyment, the stammering of senses, no longer related to spirit : hypnotism.

In others this tension was notably relaxed. We moved on, relieved by Schongauer's amenity; the gentleness of Jan Joest's holy conversation by the fountain rejoiced us like a kindly greeting; Marmion's quiet musing allowed us to chat

VELAZQUEZ: POPE INNOCENT

DORIA-PAMFILI PALACE, ROME

lightly together. The grimness of the face disappeared, Stephan Lochner miled. It was not the milder episode but the manner in which it was treated, the soft emotion of the painter making itself felt even now. Why do we call this mobile thing painting just as we do the other rigid thing ? We never see Lochner twice alike, he lives like ourselves, his thousand tones in one colour give an endless variety of new images. Why, instead of painting simple reds and blues like the Primitive, did he prepare his colour on the picture itself, making it something beyond the episode, a veritable second sacrament, the image of his own personality ?

Düsseldorf had a thousand other differences between men and periods to show. But the mightiest was to be found on the upper storey of the Exhibition, where in the first room hung the Cuyp, Rembrandt's *Christ at the Column* and his portrait of himself, laughing. In a moment everything else had sunk to a lower level, and one felt as if uplifted to freedom. A many-coloured life. Laughter rang out from solemn frames, subdued sobs arose from cheerful pictures. All were speaking to each other and speaking to us, and we almost permitted ourselves to argue with Rembrandt. This is painting. Painting began when humanity entered into art and myth gave way to it ; when the spectator no longer feigned to pray before a picture, but prostrated his soul consciously and enthusiastically at the feet of great personalities.

Courbet's great decoration belongs to this art. There is but one word to describe both his manner and that of the Primitives : monumental. It depicts the highest spiritual phase of two different worlds. In the one we must forget existence in order to enjoy, in the other we must be able to enjoy in order to rejoice in existence.

Which of the two is the higher—an inquiry which, rising far above the interest of the amateur, addresses itself to the deepest impulse of beauty-loving personalities—can only be doubted by those who have not yet recognised the importance of the question.

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The influence of Velazquez is no less evident in many other works of the same period, and also in the *Rencontre* or *Bon jour Monsieur Courbet* of the Exhibition of 1855, now in the Montpellier Museum, in which the young master immortalised his first worshipper, Bruyas, the purchaser of the *Casseurs de Pierre*, *Les Baigneuses*, *La Fileuse*, &c. But at the same time he retained the antithesis of the Velazquez-idea, his strong modelling. In the *Rencontre* the profiles of the three figures look as if they were cut out against the high horizon, notably the painter's magnificent head with the much ridiculed " Assyrian " profile, and looking at them we seem to have all the other dimensions of the body before us. Both tendencies are apparent in the *Demoiselles au bord de la Seine* of 1856, and even in the group of the Proudhon family of 1863, now in the Petit Palais. As we know from the two dates to the left of the Proudhon, and the notes in the Catalogue of the Courbet Exhibition of 1882, the artist painted his friend from memory, as Proudhon had appeared to him twelve years before, seated on the threshold of his house. This anecdote, revealing an absolutely phenomenal feat of memory, would be easier to comprehend if Courbet had attempted to make the picture a psychological memorial, which would have been peculiarly appropriate to his relations with the philosopher. But the picture is the most faithful realism, and more purely an artistic, almost a mathematical problem, than any of his works. The preservation of plastic effect in the foreshortening of the principal figure

verges on the miraculous, and at the same time there is the most amazing fidelity of likeness and truth of detail. The blue trousers and whitish grey blouse are exact in every fold. We cannot quite throw off the impression that the artist painted rather too rigidly here, fixing the body so exactly that it was impossible to preserve the necessary mobility. The squat shape of the work and the lack of connection with the group on the right side increase this effect. The children, in momentary attitudes, are in themselves a picture, of the utmost refinement of colour; a reseda tone predominates in the dresses, illumined by the delicate pinks of the young carnations. The liquid touch shows the most perfect mastery. But nothing of all this found favour with the critics. Even such semi-adherents as Bürger condemned it, and even now the work is classed as mediocre because of its "lack of intellectuality." In the biography published by Estignard in 1896, the worst, indeed, of all the notices of the master so far perpetrated, the picture is dismissed with amazing assurance as a fiasco.

Such criticism was facile enough. The defects of the *Demoiselles au Bord de la Seine*, of the *Proudhon*, and of many kindred works are obvious. But that there were exquisite things in these pictures too, that their whole manner made it impossible to judge them by the criterion satisfied by every mediocre painter, that it would have been easy enough to give the *Cribleuses* or the *Demoiselles* less strenuous attitudes, to paint Proudhon without the children, or the children without Proudhon—all this escaped these rigorous judges. Courbet lacked a certain harmony, such works as these show it plainly enough; but we must not forget that this man had to master greater complexities than others. Harsh judgment of him belongs to the same category as the censure audaciously meted out to Michelangelo for centuries, when a gracious boy showed to greater advantage than the greatest genius the world has known. Men who give their all must sometimes give fragments. The defect is a result of their richness, of natures absorbed in production, of a hatred of all compromise. What is wanting in them is supplied by their followers, who gather round such geniuses as the disciples round Christ, and do their part towards turning the gold into current coin.

But in reality the artistic reproach was merely a pretext, masking repulsion to very different aspects of Courbet's personality. The public was indignant, not because his mathematics were occasionally at fault, not because of the manner of his calculation, but because he calculated at all. What they really blamed in him was the antithesis of the criticism they formulated. Courbet was only too successful where the public accused him of failure; for they were not less clamorous against his single figures, where their criticisms lost even their relative justness, against his portraits and his renderings of naked flesh; these were indeed perhaps the works that provoked the greatest hostility. This hatred gave the strongest possible impetus to Courbet's development in the sixties. As a Socialist, the character in which he appeared to the multitude in the fifties, he was looked upon as less noxious. His supposed philosophy was discussed, and was pronounced to be possibly a mere pastime for empty hours, the charm of contrast in the merry time of the Second Empire. When Courbet had satisfied his hankering after "l'allégorie réelle," and had done enough revolutionary things, he devoted himself solely to painting, and became revolutionary in a sense of which the *bourgeois* had no notion.

The innovation lay in his landscapes. The great series of woodland and hunting scenes was inaugurated as early as the fifties. There is a *Stag* of 1853

in the Marseilles Museum. Four years later he painted *La Curée*. The most famous of the woodland pictures date from the sixties. The series concludes with the remarkable *Halali*, in the Besançon Museum, also of colossal size; a dramatic hunting scene in a magnificent snowy landscape, the last great figure-piece, the apotheosis of this aspect of the inexhaustible master.

Of this period also the Louvre possesses about the best examples; indeed, till quite recently, Courbet was represented more brilliantly and more adequately in the Louvre than any of his contemporaries. The Thomy Thiery Collection, with its gems of 1830, has now made the proportion more equitable.

In this interval, from about 1853 to 1870, Courbet developed his landscape. *Le Mirage*, the large landscape with a pond of 1855, lately acquired for the Schwabach collection, Berlin, for all its peculiar lyric beauty, has a certain tameness of handling. Compared with the *Halali*, the *Curée*, in spite of great charm of modelling, seems hard and dull. Hounds, men, and trees are conscientiously treated, but they look isolated; the wood is sparse, we count the trees. Courbet, who seems himself to have been conscious of its lack of concentration, took out the dead stag and made one of his finest pictures of it, the work in the Mesdag Museum. Here the green of the forest flows about the splendid brown of the tree-trunks. The hanging carcase in the foreground is painted with gradations of the same brown in every kind of tone, so that the vigorous modelling of the beast is veiled in superb tone-painting, which produces absolute unity of effect. The picture is painted like an old Dutch picture. Passing the hand over it we discern no inequalities of surface. Beauty of material, which we get from the old masters, quite irrespective of durability, as a special and industrial quality, has also been given us by Courbet in this and in many other pictures.

The large *Combat de Cerfs*, of 1861, plays a part in this period comparable to that of the *Atelier* and the *Enterrement* of an earlier stage. It collects results and spreads them out homogeneously. The picture is skied in the Louvre, so that the visitor can rarely get a lively impression of it. Like most of the examples of this period, it is thinly painted with a very restricted palette, and contains one of the master's finest compositions. The three stags form a boldly curved ornament against the rectilinear system of the trees. The happy choice of the planes, the harmonious relation of the group to the size and shape of the canvas, and the quiet harmony of the colour procure a perfectly balanced effect. It is a fresco in a new style. Were it installed like the *Atelier* it would appear as a rare testimony to Courbet's gifts as a monumental artist. For here he hit upon a composition which divides the whole picture equally, in spite of its colossal size. It is much to be hoped that it may some day be suitably hung, flanked by the other pictures of the same Salon (1861), which nearly all deal with venery. The exception was the *Roche Oragnon*, a rocky tract of the Maizières valley, hailed by Th. Gautier as the work of a "talent magistral," a work in which Courbet entered upon a new phase. About 1865, when the large woodland scenes, the *Puits Noir*, the *Remise de Chevreuils*, &c., were painted, Courbet's landscape was at its zenith.

At his best period Courbet's gifts concentrate themselves to very compact expression. The power which had formerly been directed to details of an important but also of a problematic kind, now flowed into a single vigorous form. Form sounds a bold term to apply to rhythms of the brush. A narrow specialist might deem the modelling of the *Proudhon* more formal than the material of the

Puits Noir. Courbet himself was obviously not quite clear about it. For he had no idea of laying logical hold on that which he achieved in moments of happy inspiration : a surface undulating in a single rhythm. Even in his most brilliant works of this period we trace a lingering tendency, due not to instinct but to deliberation, to differentiate material, directly he introduces figures and animals into his landscapes. The roes in the *Remise de Chevreuils* are hardly as yet perfectly resolved constituents of the picture. Even in the huge *Siesta*, of the year 1868, now in the Petit Palais, the force of the brown and white hides wars with the green of the landscape. The struggle is certainly a grandiose spectacle, and all the objections that may be urged are insignificant reservations. At most such objections suffice to justify a higher estimate of the pure landscapes, such as the *Ruisseau du Puits Noir* in the Louvre. In these the progress for which Courbet stands in the history of art-development is most evident.

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This progress is based on the knowledge that the object per se plays no part in art, and that it may be suppressed without making use of a traditional stylistic method ; that only power asserts itself ; that the form of a tree, however beautiful, cannot be made a substitute for the forest ; that a part cannot contain the organic quality of the mass. I do not believe that Courbet arrived at this knowledge by reflection, for the idea is latent in all his early pictures, and even the greatest painter could not produce works of art altogether without it. The advance was rather a logical consequence of his earlier progress.

Zola called him a " faiseur de chair," thinking only of his women, *la Femme Couchée*, *la Femme à la Vague*, *la Femme au Perroquet*, and the like, of whom Courbet painted the animal aspects, the elementary quality of their nature.

Courbet's figures suggest the nude women both of Titian and of Rubens, though we cannot class them with either. They are too boisterous for the calmly breathing flesh of the Venetians, too equable for the splendours of Rubens. Of course the affinity to Rubens' flesh-painting is the most obvious. In *Les Baigneuses* this manifests itself even in the choice of subject. But later on Courbet severed himself completely from the great glorifier of woman. He painted his women more as the Dutchmen painted still-life. There is a very beautiful example in the Mesdag Museum. A blond and tender form lies on a bed with a red pillow. The gray background is partly covered by a curtain of dark olive green. The gray is repeated more softly in the folds of the white sheet, and still more soberly in the carnations, where it harmonises with a very tender tone of the red cushion. Like these, all the other colours stand in a well-ordered relation one to another, partly in warm contrast, partly organically blended. There are no significant gestures, nothing that might lead to dramatic developments. On the other hand, the forms are modelled with perfect plasticity and marvellously composed in the space. The woman lies there in a fashion that could not be improved upon for an object the artist seeks to bring into favourable relation with other things in the same frame.

Of course this was no new method discovered by Courbet. The beauty of every picture depends, more or less evidently, on the same principle of design. But in all other renderings of woman the conscious or unconscious symbolism of the artist makes a manifest addition. This brings the woman into prominence by a spiritual relation ; and on this account he paints her differently, even if only in slight shades, to all the rest, and makes our enjoyment of the beauty

of the creature so emphasised irradiate the rest of the composition. Titian's sleeping *Venus* in the Tribuna is the queen of the picture, playing with its beauty. An emanation from her lies upon everything in the room. Rubens' women in the *Bacchanalia* communicate their frenzy to their companions, or, rather, that which drives them and their companions on is a wild love-instinct, which swiftly builds a bridge to our intelligence, transforming what the brush has ruthlessly brought together into a higher degree of sensation. Woman was the chief personage for Courbet too, but only in so far as she is distinguished from a cushion, a curtain, or any other inanimate object by greater richness of planes, lines and colour. Woman is only the richest detail of his pictures, not their subject. He lays stress upon this relation, conceives woman as superficially as possible, and hence he grasps those qualities in her which alone can be rendered with admirable intensity.

Courbet made progress in this conception. He transferred his idea of " chair," the idea which sees only material in everything that can be painted, to all Nature, and necessarily achieved his greatest effects where he found the greatest multiplicity of objects, in landscape. Fine as his women and animals are, we see plainly that in these his ambition never quite permitted the display of all his individual powers. The remarkable dualism of his talents, which allowed him to make a distinct advance in painting, and at the same time to preserve all the works of the old masters, always induced him to work with the methods of the old masters when the motive suggested competition with these. It was only in landscape that he gathered all his powers together, in the field where the old masters had made comparatively few conquests, and here he actually gave a new conception of Nature, achieving a new, *i.e.*, a progressive concentration of multiplicity. When he was thinking only of himself, the material of his pictures received a perfectly new physiognomy. The colouring of the Flemings disappeared, his preoccupation with a polished smoothness of surface retired into the background. The brush became a new implement—brush and knife at once. He no longer painted, but forged, modelled, moulded his planes, and so produced effects which leave Courbet, the disciple of the old masters, far behind, great as he was.

The whole history of painting shows a gradual development of surface, a gradual disappearance of contour. The epidermis of the picture becomes more vital, the symbol of Nature comes nearer, the conception of form becomes ever wider and more comprehensive. In this development Courbet played a decisive part. He made the beauty of nudity, not only that of woman, but that of landscape the picture, stripped of all that does not make an effect on the eye. He created a new synthesis of the elements of landscape painting, a new material, which wrings a common characteristic from water, wood, rock and earth, and represents their unity. He painted Nature not as something objective but as something one with himself. His brush-strokes are mighty atoms of the life that breathes under the circumscribed apparition.

Compared with this the landscape of the old masters is tame, in spite of all its charm. No Primitive touched this impulse, which transformed all emotion into power. The strongest line has the effect of trivial detail in comparison. Of course, the new form is, in the last instance, as conventional a conception as line, but the knowledge of this conception remains shrouded by the turmoil of instinct. Form remains form, is not concerned with the understanding, but works like Nature herself, in whom we recognise beauty long before we ask ourselves whence it arises.

But Courbet is divided from the landscape painters of the seventeenth century by the same thing which separates himself from his old master period. To place him unreservedly above them would be to fail in appreciation of their originality and the necessities of historical development. The essential charm we find in them belongs to them and is unsurpassed in its way. Courbet set it aside. But he grasped what appeared to them in its first indications, the substitution of the arabesque of impasto for the smooth surface. At the same time he abandoned himself more unreservedly to his temperament than the lovers of quiet Dutch canals, and painted with greater verve. As compared with them he might be called a dramatic painter, although he never painted a drama. His power was in itself dramatic, for it achieved the concentration of dramatic energy solely by the capacity for penetrating externals.

This is why Courbet has no need of subject, why, indeed, it is injurious to him. The more restricted the less psychological, the less spiritual the so-called content, the richer, the more dæmoniacally tempestuous, the more powerful even to the verge of sublimity was the picture.

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We see that Courbet's conception was remote indeed from the accustomed method, in which the effect is got by the scenic composition of the picture. Even the "naturalist," who intends only to represent what he sees, chooses the nature best suited to his purpose; he corrects it in order to achieve characteristic effects of some kind by his subject—in other words, he composes. For Courbet, on the other hand, the significance of the object in space—quite apart from its symbolic significance, which, indeed, never existed for him—gradually retired more and more into the background. He who strove so strenuously for form aimed also at painting the conglomerate of Nature, not the forms of isolated objects. Even light and air lost their supreme importance for him. Indeed, he never consciously concerned himself about problems of light. The landscape of 1860, in the Stedelijk Museum, at Amsterdam, where, contrary to his custom, he attempted a play of atmosphere, is peculiarly tame and dull in effect. The lack of atmosphere in the *Proudhon* and many other pictures gave occasion for many justifiable criticisms from his contemporaries. But they overlooked the fact that Courbet could not, in the nature of things, paint otherwise, as long as he desired to preserve the purity of his forms, and that his renunciation of unity in effects of light, or rather of emphasis on such unity, sprang from his reluctance to weaken the splendour of his realities. It is one of the many phenomena of this career that the same man, who approached Ingres in this reluctance, afterwards put Nature in a mortar, so to speak, in order to achieve absolute unity. But even here again he was not actuated by considerations of light and atmosphere. It is not air but colour that illumines his later pictures. The particle of colour as moulded by him on the canvas becomes the vehicle of all the suggestive elements which evoke the idea of the organic in the successful pictures of his predecessors. He reduced pictorial expression to natural sound, as it were. For this he required his extraordinary command of all the imaginable methods of his craft, and a cold-blooded audacity. That such a procedure should have seemed like the speech of a savage to spectators accustomed to concise representations and definite thoughts in pictures is hardly surprising. This generalising treatment was the more repellent, when it was applied to the sacred human body. Courbet saw in man a piece of flesh no less than in the ox he gave his pupils as a model, and the

ox was to him as much a piece of cellular tissue as the bark of a tree or a moss-grown rock. The public took this as a personal affront. Each spectator unconsciously identified himself with the heroes of these pictures—even when the heroes were oxen—and felt himself treated as vegetable matter. That Delacroix himself had not been far from such a conception, when he threw his *Christ in the Garden of Olives* on the ground as a piece of quivering flesh, was a fact that escaped the Romanticist himself and all his circle. Delacroix too generalised, as does every painter who attempts to relate the part to the whole. In his "Journal," he expressly defines genius as the gift of generalising, and tries to confute Courbet by this very phrase.* That to all appearances he was doing something different to Courbet proved convincing even to his wisdom. In reality the only difference was that Delacroix allowed the spiritual impetus which led him to generalise to be divined. He did not conceal his personal sympathy, which caused him to proceed thus, but rather he showed it in his dramatic material, an unconscious and unimportant compromise which nevertheless captivated the spectator. Courbet was taken for something essentially different, at best, respectable perhaps, but deficient in the characteristics of art. Even such a sincere admirer of Courbet as Duret accepts his friend's "absence d'imagination" and "absence d'émotion" as proven as late as 1867, not perceiving that he thereby denied the artist.

Courbet too felt emotion. Otherwise it would never have occurred to him to paint. He expressed this when he was once asked how he painted his landscapes by the answer: "Je suis ému." The phrase, like all others, especially when he said it with a provincial accent, only served to make him ridiculous. Lafenestre can certainly have met with little comprehension among his readers when, in his discussion of the Salon, he said, in reference to Corot and Courbet, that there are a thousand kinds of emotion roused by Nature, and that Courbet was moved by it no less than Corot, only in a different manner.† People did not understand that in Courbet the medium of emotion was only a stage deeper, and that the result of this was a certain modification of the effect upon the spectator—the counter-emotion. They had no idea that here one of those transformations was accomplished which history had already witnessed dozens of times.

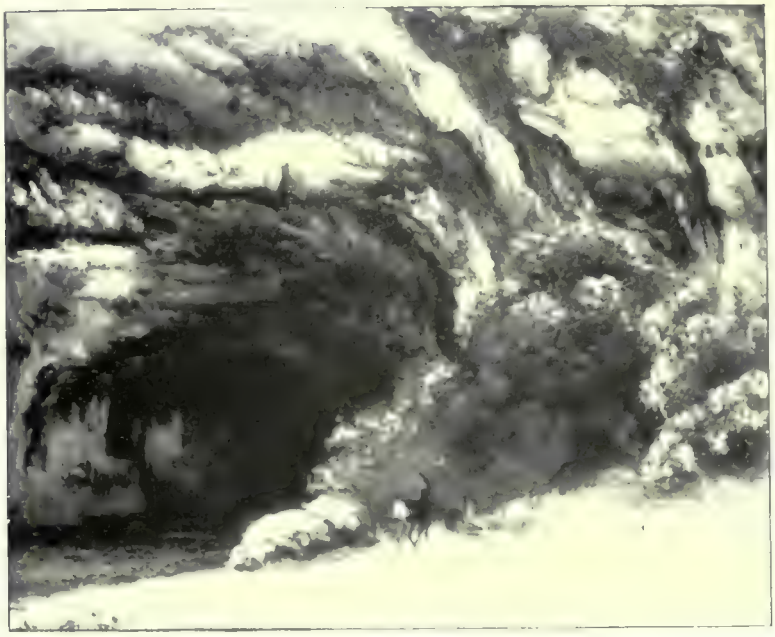
For what else is it that distinguishes one art epoch from another, one humanity from another, if not this transformation? The object, the world, the theme, the law, this is always the same. It is only the subject that changes—that is to say, the emotion. The standard varies from time to time. But every change in the standard repels, and must repel, the multitude, for it is accomplished against their will, and consequently appears to them in the light of a humiliation, even when it is solely a question of æsthetic things. Delacroix painted his objects as battle-pieces, and this pleased the mob, although it was by no means martially disposed. Courbet treated them as still life, and this was considered unfeeling. Generalisation was the art of the one no less than of the other; it was only the generaliser who had changed. At the same time, Courbet's art was by no means an absolute novelty. Many of the Dutchmen had painted like him in all essentials. But their manner of generalising, it appeared, was based on a conception, the rollicking gaiety of which amuses posterity. Their genre style helped them. Those, indeed, who went recklessly beyond the genre style, like the aged Rembrandt, came off very badly with the method. The second *Anatomy Lesson* was, no doubt, just as irritating to contemporaries as Courbet's *Femme Couchée*.

* Journal, ii. p. 159.

† "L'Art vivant" (Fischbacher: Paris, 1887).

It must be admitted that Courbet did all he could personally to make his manner detestable to the public. He roared with laughter when they talked to him of soul, and would not admit—was perhaps himself unconscious of the fact—that his own things allowed plenty of scope for the discussion of soul, if people did not restrict the term to the souls of painter-poets in action.

For it would be by no means audacious to reckon him among the disciples of Romanticism; not that of the Delacroix worshippers, but that of the widest domain of Delacroix' art, if we strip this of all literary trappings, and go down to essentials. In the beginning we noted certain affinities to the painter of the *Dante's Boat*. These disappear in the course of years, but recur at the time of full fruition, in the sixties. Courbet aimed at similar ends by different methods. That he strikes us as so different from Delacroix is perhaps less his fault than ours, because we find it so difficult to cast off the fetters of the object, and are deceived by the less apparent character of his Romanticism. His distant affinity to Daumier is more easily recognised. This his contemporaries saw, and of course used to the detriment of Courbet. It was made a reproach to him that he sought inspiration in Daumier's caricatures, and emulated Hogarth. This seems less abusive to us now than it did fifty years ago, when the comparison was intended to belittle both reputed exemplar and supposed imitator. The vigourous line of Daumier's drawings may have pleased Courbet, though he knew himself to be of other stuff. But he was nearer to Daumier, the great painter, the creator of the *Wagon de troisième Classe*, &c., and we seem to find an echo of this sympathy in many a sketch of Courbet's. More evident—nay, most unmistakable—is the relation to another master of the same period, a painter highly esteemed by both Delacroix and Daumier—Decamps. Decamps and Courbet are near relatives, not only as animal painters, in which genre both made use of the same broad methods—the two hounds in *La Curée* are of the same breed as Decamps' famous dogs—but more especially as portrait painters, if we can term Courbet's flesh paintings portraits, and can admit studies of four-footed sitters to the category. In both there is the same sincerity, leading by a like road to the monumental. When Decamps in his youth painted the *Défaite des Cimbres*, now in the Louvre, he made the human horde grow out of the soil, in order to get the indescribable effect of mass he has achieved. It is hardly necessary to see these hordes at all to feel this same impression of a vast animated field, so strangely dramatic is the formation of the surface. This was Courbet's way of thinking too, and in this he was confirmed by his study of the greatest genius of that generation, the germ of all the rest, Géricault, traces of whom we have already noted in Courbet's early work. But it was at his ripest period that the painter of the *Radeau de la Méduse* is most apparent, not so much in any special picture as in general outlook, in temperament. Courbet shows the same dramatic quality which Géricault was able to give to a face, a horse, a piece of ground, however flat and bare, the dramatic quality which lies in the conception of the incident and the vigour of its rendering. Not so seductively as his great forerunner, it is true, and without the charm of splendid colour finally achieved by Géricault. Courbet's palette remained old-fashioned. And he lacked the Hellenism of the young giant; the plebeian flavour in many of the pseudo-Socialist's pronouncements was very remote from the innate nobility of the cavalier painter. But the vigour of instinct, the audacity of power, is common to both. Both knew where the secret of effect lay.



COURBET: THE GROTTO OF THE LOIRE

PHOTOGRAPH DURAND RUEL

COURBET: THE GROTTO

PHOTOGRAPH DURAND-RUEL

Géricault accompanied Courbet to the threshold of his last artistic phase, which we may call his phase of pure reason, a short but imperishable epoch. This last stage he travelled quite alone. It is the period of his latest picture in the Louvre, *La Vague*. It is, however, not possible to define it very precisely. There are many contemporary pictures, portraits in particular, which show no relation to this, and might very well have been painted ten years earlier.

The Trouville sea-pieces begin about the middle of the sixties. They are legion. Castagnary asserts that he painted one every day in a few hours, and produced about forty of them in the summer of 1865. They were at first quiet surfaces, brilliantly divided, in which the perspective is only animated by the various tones of the water under the various rays of light. His celebrated phrase, "Le paysage est une affaire de tons," could not be more strikingly illustrated than by his sea-pieces—sea-portraits, as we might call them. At first he painted them lovingly, almost with tenderness, so carefully did he trace the blue surface which casts its lustre into the heavens and is reflected thence again. Here he became a poet. The *Femme à la Vague* of the Faure collection, painted in 1868, which to Courbet was perhaps merely the study of a naked torso in the water, became a symbol. Here again he put all his strength into the modelling of a female body, moulding the bust and the uplifted arms with consummate mastery, and so preserving the rhythm of the sea in spite of the minute painting that we seem to behold a personification of the wave.

But nothing approaches the vigour of expression with which he represented the element itself without any accessories at this period. He was even a more enthusiastic swimmer than sportsman, and we feel this in the latest sea-pieces. They are painted as seen from the sea, not from the land—waves as they appear to one buffeted by them. He expresses on a large scale the maximum of power with a comparative minimum of visible space, sections of the whole raging welter of the waters.

The Wave of 1870, in the Louvre, marks the culminating-point of this period; and it is not a solitary example. There are about a dozen variants—one in the Berlin Gallery, one in the Stedelijk Museum at Amsterdam, others in private collections. In the Louvre version the relation of the water to the blue-gray sky is unusually beautiful, but on the other hand the over-insistent boats on the shore and the shore itself are disturbing elements. The old fault which Delacroix criticised is not even yet overcome. It is the same fault which dims the splendour of the brilliant grotto pictures to some extent. In one of these a man is sitting in the cave, in another we see a couple of deer. The proportion of these to the rest is altogether faulty, not only as to size, but as to material. The rock is felt, and translated into a wonderful new material. No detail is given, though we seem to be standing close to it. It is the might of this upheld and upholding homogeneous mass which is painted, and beside it the figures and animals look trivial. In the Berlin example the shore occupies only a little bit of the left side. In others we have only sea and sky. He never succeeded in animating these roaring waves with ships in a credible fashion. All suggestion of humanity seems a crime against this solitary Nature.

In 1870 Courbet reached the summit of his art, and descended rapidly into the valley. He attempted to play a part in the Commune, and this was his undoing. What was the precise degree of his offence, whether he was justly condemned, whether the friends who exonerated him from all share in the destruction

of the Vendôme column were right or not, are matters which no longer interest us greatly. His interference in politics was one of the discords of his life, and, like all the rest, it arose from an excess of vigour. He looked upon politics as a blague, and found people who took the politician seriously, instead of allowing some latitude to the artist.

In his last years he painted, in addition to portraits, a number of still-life pictures, in which his delight in material achieved a final victory. A very beautiful portrait of himself in high tones, painted in 1871 in the prison of Ste. Pélagie, and now in the Mesdag Museum, as a pendant to the remarkable portrait of Delacroix by himself, shows the combination of a mellow stroke-painting with the most delicate tonal art in the hair and beard, a combination only possible to this versatile master. The still-life pictures of the same period offer a final problem for solution. It is indeed remarkable that at this stage, after his brilliant landscapes and sea-pieces, Courbet should have set aside the results therein achieved, and painted his fruit like an old master. In the same collection at The Hague there is a picture with some wonderful apples, also painted in prison. The fruits, rounded with a very fine brush, glow like the faces in the *Enterrement*, but much more tenderly and purely. Whitish lights are reflected in the smooth, deep red material. The apples lie in company with a duck and a blue Delft jar in—a landscape. A stately brown tree enlivens the foreground, and behind it stretches a superb whitish gray sky. This arrangement is still more striking in the similar, but not quite so successful, still-life of the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum.* The apples here again are glowing red, except one, which stands out in vivid yellow. Here, even more than in the Hague picture, the landscape is treated as if the apples were important active agents. The tree behind them should be by rights four times as large, and the reddish landscape four times as extensive. And even this gross blunder in perspective, obviously the result of unaccustomed painting without models, is overcome by the perfection of the material. We are inclined to think we ourselves must be wrong, rather than attribute a glaring error to the master.

The outlaw painted no more great works. Leaving the Parisian catastrophe out of the question, it may be that his irregular life, and notably his immoderate drinking, hastened his end. He died in the Swiss village of La Tour de Peilz on the last day of 1877, aged fifty-seven years.

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If we survey Courbet's life-work, as far as it is possible so to do, his development becomes clear, to a certain extent. We see at least a definite course; and the fact that this is not the only one, and that the problem is not to be categorically solved, tends to increase the interest rather than to belittle the artist. We understand that the softness of the forties had to go to make way for the momentous works of the *Enterrement* period, and that the atmosphere from which these arose had to be replaced by the mightier material of the later landscape painter. We see the steadily increasing unity which manifests itself in the woodland pictures, and lastly in the sea-pieces, and feel that the constantly recurring contrast between modelling of details and generalisation was necessary to make the end so superb.

We feel some surprise now that no one in the master's lifetime called attention to this, the most important aspect from the artistic point of view, that no one

* Dated 1872. It is, moreover, the only genuine Courbet in the Rijksmuseum. The two landscapes are forgeries.

CONSTANTIN GUYS: AT MABILLE (WATER COLOUR)

pointed out the unique combination of the weightiest problems of painting in a single personality, that, amidst all the wrangling, no voice proclaimed Courbet's lofty artistic attitude. To accuse this complexity of manifestations of being limited, to dispose of Courbet by dubbing him a stupid fellow, as nearly all the writers who have dealt with him have done, seems to me the height of folly. It is sometimes urged that a critic who censures an artist has no right to be severe, because he himself could not do better. This is, of course, absurd. But it is a different matter when the critic fastens on personal things, as all Courbet's biographers have done hitherto. Courbet's oft-proclaimed stupidity is a biographical detail of secondary importance. It is true that we are not very favourably impressed by sayings of his that have come down to us, or by certain transactions of his that have been recorded. But is it not conceivable that a man who could do what he liked as an artist, and who rose to this omnipotence from humble origin, without finding one sensible companion among his many adherents, may have paid for his consciousness and clarity as an artist by the weakness of other parts of his intelligence? It requires no great genius for analysis to understand this combination of great artistic gifts with very human failings: a genius spurred by an alcoholic imagination, condemned to carry about with him the mind of a sly, greedy, and tyrannical peasant, and to pose before the coarse spirits of his circle under a mask borrowed partly from Rabelais, partly from Don Quixote. The only sensible book about Courbet that has appeared so far is the raw psychology of a boon companion, who apparently confines himself to a record of the pranks and jests of the man, with such sincerity that the artist's true face looks out most poignantly from the tragi-comedy.*

Whether those who concerned themselves with art in France really knew him I will not decide. In any case their judgments were over-hasty. The bare fact, for instance, that he was fond of painting his own portrait has been sufficient to establish his narrow-minded vanity in the minds of his biographers—I could quote some half-dozen. There is not a single portrait of Courbet by himself that is not a masterpiece of painting or drawing, and this should sufficiently explain the existence of them all. No one has ever made it a reproach to Rembrandt that he showed a like interest in his own countenance.

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Courbet, the child of Nature, began by working after the fashion of the best painters. He took the methods of the old masters as he found them, because he could use them thus, and modified them afterwards in the manner best suited to his purpose. He handled the brush with the same mastery they showed, and when he saw that he could do more with the palette knife, he threw the brush aside. Even this his critics have made a reproach to him! Lemonnier writes as if Courbet had been the inventor of this "vice nouveau," just as if Decamps before him, Constable before him again, and before Constable many another glorious master, Rembrandt above all, had not practised this "vice." Indeed, Courbet continued the old masters, almost in a literal sense, save that in the span of a single lifetime he went through a development similar to that of Rembrandt in olden times, a development only accomplished by whole generations in earlier ages still. If Rembrandt and Hals had lived some centuries later they would have come to Courbet's manner.

* Gros-Kost: "Courbet, Souvenirs intimes" (Paris: Derveaux, 1880).

This brings me to an analytical element which I passed over before, in the interests of continuity.

To give the Spaniards their full sponsorial rights, I merely glanced at the influence of the Dutchmen. This asserts itself when that of Velazquez and Zurbaran begins to wane. Strange to say, Courbet reminds us less of the great tone-painters of Holland than of the masters whose chief preoccupation was form. He recalls Potter, and even the "hard" Potter who painted the *Young Bull* in the Mauritshuis. The weakness of this masterpiece, its lack of atmosphere, was also Courbet's weakness. But their beauties are identical too—the fine modelling, the exhaustive handling of the theme to get the desired effect. We seem to recognise the superb figure of the man by the tree in many of the Frenchman's pictures. Among the painters of interiors, Aertsen seems to have attracted him rather than Craesbeeck, in spite of his autobiographical assertions—the Aertsen without the brown sauce, who enamelled rather than painted the cook in the white apron and red skirt of the Brussels Gallery. Hals we found at the beginning. Courbet remained true to him all his life. At his prime the greatest of the Dutchmen came into his orbit. The Puits Noir landscapes are painted like Rembrandt's latest portraits of himself. The relation to Hals is more intimate. Courbet does not rise to the spiritual sphere of the *Syndics*. His humanity too was akin to Hals. From all we know of the Haarlemer, he must have been a similar personality—a genius who preferred the superficial aspects.

These influences gradually drove Velazquez and Zurbaran into the background. The mature landscape painter shows no trace of their manner. But we find affinities of structure in Goya's landscapes. The fine *May-tree* sketch in the Berlin National Gallery, with its large planes spread with the palette knife, would certainly have delighted Courbet.

Among the immediate predecessors of Courbet the landscape painter we must not overlook Constable; and this relation brought Courbet and Corot into line, though the Englishman's influence on the two was of a very different kind. Corot profited most; he cleaned his palette. Courbet's colour was not affected in any way, but, on the other hand, he was frequently stimulated by Constable's handling. His temperament differed even more radically from the Englishman's than Corot's less sharply defined individuality. Courbet's technique, like Corot's methods, gained steadily in breadth, whereas Constable became sharper. Courbet's whole field of development, moreover, was more complex. But it is obvious that he had seen Constable. It is not unlikely that Georges Michel may have served as intermediary. Michel, one of the first artists who painted the woods of Fontainebleau, was a precursor whose importance has not been sufficiently insisted upon.* Michel paid a visit to England at the time of Constable's greatest successes. His resemblance to Courbet not only in the woodland scene in the Louvre, but in certain more important landscapes, is striking. I am not, of course, comparing him with Courbet at his best.

This necessary analysis may have led the reader to think of Courbet as an artist interesting mainly by the various strains that met in him, or by the speculations concerning technique to which he gives rise. If so, the author rather than his hero is at fault. Brilliantly as Courbet painted, no one was ever less absorbed in mere manipulation. An illustration will make my point clearer. A painter I have repeatedly mentioned, who was in certain respects closely related

* See André Michel, "Notes sur l'Art moderne" (Colin et Cie.: Paris, 1896).

EUGÈNE LAMI: RACES AT MAISONS LAFITTE

A. ROUART COLLECTION, PARIS

to Courbet, Decamps, was a craftsman in a much narrower sense, and it was just his technical, or rather technological, preoccupations which placed him so far below the master of Ornans. The procedure of his painting so fascinated him that at last he had but one idea—how to make the weft of his picture more solid and more brilliant. His painting became a kind of complicated handiwork; he embroidered his pictures, regardless of all but the embroidery. He became a brilliant artificer, a mannerist.

In Courbet's case the recklessness of the Bohemian tended to preserve him from a declension due in a great measure to commercial considerations. But even he was occasionally betrayed by his dexterity, and gave us pictures that detract from the sum of his achievement. The Brussels Museum has had the ill-luck to acquire three very different examples of the master, all of very inferior quality. The portrait of Stevens, in an unpleasant brownish red tone, shows the smooth painting without any of the obstacles which Courbet had to overcome in the process—obstacles we must feel in order to appreciate the gift. The portrait of Mme. Fontaine shows the same defect in another—a bluish black—tone. In the most important of the three, the picture of the dancer Guerrero, great qualities underlie every possible weakness. The portrait suffers most of all from the unresolved harmony of the colouring. The degradation of the red skirt into the detonating yellow red of the curtain on the left and the dull background to the right is peculiarly unhappy. The hideous frame is yet another unfortunate factor.

Fortunately these exceptions are rare, and they show none of that organisation in error which marks the mannerist. He never reduced either his vices or his virtues to a formula. It is this which differentiates him most sharply from the old masters, especially from those to whom he is most nearly akin. Rembrandt and Hals satisfy us by their perfectly logical development. With Courbet, as we have seen, this development is to be traced only with certain reservations. It was undoubtedly most prominent in the sixties, but this point of culmination is not invariably above the level of the early works. We see, of course, the same artist. Many sides have progressed; but many others have remained stationary, though we are conscious that they tended to greatness. The most remarkable thing is the high level of his beginnings. Other artists come into the world with talent. Courbet seems to have been born with mastery. He is like a living receptacle of precious things. If this seems remarkable enough in our traditionless age, the fact that this receptacle was a peasant makes it phenomenal. Examination of his methods of painting rebounds ineffectually from this phenomenon. It may bring us nearer to isolated pictures, but it tells us nothing of the source of the stream.

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Thus, for all the independent glory of his newer art, the audacious revolutionary appears before us linked to the past, with the old masters, the great Dutchmen and Spaniards of the golden age of painting, and not less closely with the most notable artists of the age immediately preceding his own, with those decisive influences which prepared the way for the art of the nineteenth century.

If any further justification for renewed appreciation of the master were required, we might point to the position occupied by Courbet in the art of the present. The generation of the second half of the nineteenth century in France, Holland, Belgium, and Germany, and also to a certain degree in England, the

generation which gave us modern painting, pays homage to a beneficent master in Courbet. Modern art has many tendencies. The further art advances, the more various do they become. If we were asked to name the person who has exercised the most momentous influence, and without whom our most important developments would be unthinkable, we should cite Courbet. The most distinguished personalities in France were so dependent upon him in their beginnings that it would hardly be an exaggeration to call them his pupils.

In England, realism assimilated the ideas attributed to Courbet in France rather than the master's painting. In Germany, on the other hand, the painter of Ornans was accepted with fervour. Viktor Müller, and afterwards Leibl, drew inspiration from him. Thoma, too, owes the fine works of his early period to Courbet's influence. Round Leibl and Trübner, and finally round Liebermann, grew up a school, the only one in the Germany of the nineteenth century that wanted to paint and only to paint. They honour Courbet as their intellectual if not their active and personal founder.

Belgium is no less indebted to the master. Louis Dubois and Arton, Baron, Boulanger, Sacré, and Rops—as far as he attempted to paint—in short, the whole body of serious artists, who, gathering round Courbet's friend, Alfred Stevens, and Henri de Braekeleer, gave the best in Belgian painting, derive more or less directly from Courbet.

In the Holland of Maris, Mauve, and Mesdag he divides the honours of inspiration with Daubigny and the older painters of Fontainebleau. In Scandinavia, in Switzerland, and in all countries where artists concerned themselves with the true nature of painting, Courbet's spirit made for progress.

In spite of this universal importance, in spite of the comprehensive work which, setting aside all these relationships, strikes one as a mighty, immortal life, Courbet stands in the cold shadow of forgetfulness. The dealer sets prices ten and twenty times higher on his disciples' pictures than on his, and the connoisseur restricts himself to historical appreciation. France is responsible—the France who could not forget the man in the great artist. No doubt this frame of mind will disappear with the eye-witnesses of the events of 1871. Courbet himself is to blame to some extent. In his last years he accepted the help of inferior collaborators, and signed a number of landscapes he had barely touched.*

Strange to say, the rapidly consummated fame of the Impressionists was of most vital disadvantage to him. France was sighing for more national artists. The age demanded lighter colour, greater taste, purer harmonies. The *Enterrement à Ornans* was eclipsed by the luminous splendour of the *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*. This instinct has given us so many works much more exquisite, and not less—nay, more—important, that we cannot reproach it. No references to history can guide us in questions of feeling, nor any sense of justice to the dead. And if we had to choose, who would not rather forego this one than the many indispensables? But is this hard choice really imposed upon us? Is the space for great men in our memory as limited as the room in a theatre? Have we not reconquered others who were deprived of the affection of humanity for decades and centuries because they did not catch the taste of the day? And here I may touch on the perverse criterion that we ought all to resist: we ought not to treat great artists as matters of taste. It is not so much justice to them as consideration for ourselves that demands a more serious appreciation. Enjoyment of Rembrandt was denied

* Many of these were painted by his young friend B. Pata.

JONGKIND: VIEW OF HONFLEUR (1865)
PHOTOGRAPH DURAND-RUEL

SISLEY: THE FLOOD (L'INONDATION) (1875)
CAMONDO COLLECTION, PARIS

to generations while a taste for the rococo prevailed because of the darkness of his canvases or the homeliness of his figures. Another period turned away from Rembrandt because its severity condemned him as baroque ; the Primitives were a sealed book to another epoch. Fashions pass away. They are legitimate forms of expression, the fulfilment of certain reactionary requirements. Great artists should stand on a more assured basis, because that relation to taste which their works reveal, in common with all human productions, does not exhaust their value. What we love in them, what gives them their value to us, is more than the directly serviceable impulsion, more than the strengthening of our sense of line or colour, or the enrichment of our feeling for form, important as this is. All these are profitable, but not essential, advantages auxiliary to the artist's achievement. The greatness of that achievement lies in its affording us the possibility of purely spiritual enjoyment. Every work of art is a victory over materials. Its forms and colours are only the banners of the victor. His conquest is what we can conquer afresh at any time ; the enthusiasm which exalts us is inexhaustible, because it is impossible for us to approach the same work twice in precisely the same condition. This is the immortal benefaction of art. And as its gifts enrich us, it is to our interest to diminish the numbers of great forgotten artists. For every forgotten genius means so many hours stolen from our beatitude.

THE GENERATION OF 1870

UNDER the generic term "Impressionists," various artists have been grouped together, some of whom had only this in common, that they exhibited together, that together they endured the abuse of their peers and of the public, and that they sought solace in each other. Their bond of union was what their age scoffed at in their beginnings. It was the age when the luxurious Second Empire was tottering to its fall; the spirit of the times was singularly sterile in the domain of painting, if we make an exception in the case of Lami and his circle.* Its instincts were for unrealities of every kind, rather than for the rising splendour of the generation which succeeded the great race of 1830 in France and in the world.

That age has passed away; the generation with which Manet came to manhood has been followed by another, which sees with astonishment, as the shadows of the epoch roll away, how sharply those personalities whom it ignored stand out in relief. All the more glorious therefore is the house which modern reverence has built up round them, the sanctuary to which the best artists of our own day resort to collect their strength for future works. Four mighty columns bear it aloft: Manet, Dégas, Cézanne, Renoir. They do not stand alone. Ought we not perhaps to add to these four corner-stones of modern painting several others, notably that of the most vital of contemporary masters, Monet? We should not hesitate, but that the four are all-sufficient for the structure. To others, no longer among us, piety would fain offer the same tribute. I do not mean Puvis, who built himself a temple of his own, but a less illustrious, though no less inspired master, a contemporary of the men of 1830, whose influence was first felt by the later members of the group: Jongkind, the Hieroshigé of Europe, whose inimitable little works in oil and water-colour, in the collections of Count Camondo, Tavernier, and several others of our most fastidious connoisseurs, are like premonitions of modern Impressionism. And one of the younger men, too early lost to us, the one most closely akin to Jongkind, with whom he worked for a long time, the artificer of the loveliest jewel of modern landscape, Sisley, who as Roger Milès said, found the gestures of things, and whose death alone

* This exception, is of course, more important than the curt parenthesis above would seem to imply. We are only just beginning to appreciate Heim, Bonhommé, Bonvin, and above all, Lami. Eugène Lami, who died a nonogenarian in 1890, embodied the difference between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. With an exquisite tact, in which he concealed the most brilliant satire, he painted the glittering Court of Napoleon III. and its women, with more gaiety and good humour than the mordant Guys. He was a "little master" whose minute yet marvellously rich and free technique is unparalleled in our times. Among other examples, the Centennial Exhibition included his masterpiece, the entry of the Duchess of Orleans at the Tuileries, from the collection of M. Alexis Rouart (brother of the famous collector of Corots), who owns a considerable number of this modern St. Aubin's best works, and also fine examples of Heim and Bonhommé, &c. Strange to say, Lami is unrepresented in the Parisian museums, save by two water-colours at the Luxembourg. We reproduce one of the best sketches of his early period; it has a charm of colour that recalls Constable, and heralds the sporting pictures of Dégas and his school.

MANET: THE NYMPH SURPRISED (NYMPHE SURPRISE) 1861
MANZI COLLECTION, PARIS
PHOTOGRAPH CAMENTRON

made the fortunate possessors of his pictures the owners of property worth ten times its orginal value.

The rank and file, who fought with less distinction, though with no less merit, are innumerable. A veteran, mourned by many friends, has passed away of late, a white-bearded old Jew, picturesque as any who ever sat to Rembrandt, yet who had nothing of Rembrandt in him: Pissarro. With him and with Monet, the meridional Bazille entered the lists. Manet taught him to open his eyes, which looked through purer air at Montpellier than that vouchsafed to the Parisian. His flower-pieces might have been painted by Manet in his last period, and perhaps he will some day be recognised as the first of his generation, to whom the principle of pleinairisme was revealed. His fame would have been assured long ago, if he had followed Monet and Pissarro to London in 1870, instead of remaining to fall by a German bullet.

To others, whose lives were longer, length of days did not bring renown. Public interest is only just beginning to awaken in Lebourg, a painter whose richness of tone was scarcely surpassed by any member of his school, and Vignon, who so amply filled the space dividing Manet and Monet, had become, like his kinsman, Cézanne, a blind old man before the slow-witted amateur began to appreciate him. Boudin, one of the oldest of the group, Jongkind's best pupil and Monet's most beneficent teacher, lived in obscurity till his death a few years ago, when he was approaching his eightieth year. A distinguished woman, immortalised by Mallarmé, Berthe Morisot, interrupts the long line of men. Her sympathy with Manet was that of a man, her complete assimilation of his art was only possible to a woman. Eva Gonzalês was always a pupil only; Berthe Morisot sublimated Manet. The nobility of her colour served her for the representation of a modern symbol of womanhood, and her inimitable taste enabled her to make the symbol purer and more brilliant than the art of her exemplar had taught her. She always reminds me of the hapless Marie Bashkirtseff, who wrote and thought as Berthe Morisot painted; would she had found a Manet instead of a Bastien-Lepage for guide!

I have named a few of these famous moderns of whom, till quite lately, it was usual in conservative circles to speak as impetuous youths, and "Decadents," as we are fond of calling those who are healthier than their neighbours.

I believe their art to be as healthy as it is possible for art to be to-day. It is certainly not sickly, but rather too healthy, too simple for our worship of the old masters, and the only art that deserves to rank with the great art of the past, if, indeed, any does so deserve.

For democratic in its origin as this art may seem to the conservative, it will be easy to convince the true lover of the old masters that it springs from an intimate relation to the great efforts of an earlier age. Not, of course, an organic and methodical relation. It passed over a generation or two, and took from that immediately preceding it only what it could turn to account: Delacroix and Courbet. To that which is eternally the same, not young, not old, merely existent; which brandishes its brushes, claiming to be a pillar of our society, and is so well suited to the world it bedaubs—it had no relation; the abyss between the two was as the difference between the gutturals of a savage and the speech of a Florentine lady. But with the old, the eternally young, the eternally rejuvenescent of a bygone age it has many bonds of union.

It was not its fault that these were not even more numerous. Nothing could

be more inept than the glib phrase that labels the natural expression of these artists Naturalism. At best it is superfluous. In Paris, even in Courbet's day, Naturalism was a purely artistic formula, which, however independently applied, was bound up with the strongest tradition. The men of 1830, when they went into the forest of Fontainebleau, to paint all day from Nature, took with them something more than their primitive easels, primordial as they may have seemed to themselves, and simple as they truly were as compared with their predecessors of the eighteenth century. Consider the amazing versatility of Corot, the colouristic magnificence of Daubigny, the monumental art of Millet. But when applied to the painters of 1870 the term Naturalism becomes pure nonsense. It says no more of their art than we should say of our clothes if we called them naturalistic. Renoir is so perfectly human in his pictures, both in good and evil, that we never wish him anything but what he is, though but few of his pictures strike us as absolutely perfect. This modern sometimes shows a tincture of Second Empire vulgarity that may be repulsive to some people; but he who can make a true estimate of values will be so carried away by the artist, that he will finally accept such things as no less natural and indispensable than the voice of some sympathetic person, which was at first unpleasant to our ears. These artists go deeper perhaps than the favourites of our fathers, because they do not reveal themselves at the first moment, nor, indeed, to every one. A Cézanne or a Gauguin must be won by love; they are quiet, solitary souls, who do not disclose their secrets in trivial company. They never took part in the fashionable hubbub of the great exhibitions; at most they appeared in the Salon des Refusés or in the anarchical community of the Indépendants; and yet they are by no means anarchists. In the midst of the thousand tendencies that make up the art of our day, the Impressionists are a family, which, though each of its members disposes of his own property, seems to be as closely knit together as the famous circle of Florentines who gathered round Filippo Lippi. The parallel is more natural and more evident than the favourite comparison of the English æsthetes with the generation of Botticelli. Even if the Impressionists produce no Quattrocento, if their means and their sphere of influence continue to be superficially circumscribed, the nobility of their conception and the vigour of their expression are none the less lofty on this account; and if the undaunted championship of many speaks well for a cause, admiration is justified here.

The cause itself is not easy to formulate.* In this respect the Florentines were more fortunate. Their goal shone forth in far more visible splendour, and was recognised by the patronage of princes as by the consciousness of the people. The comprehension of all surrounded and encouraged it. The later artists are modern painters. But if ever our mourning over our abstract art may be mingled with rejoicing, it is in the contemplation of these men.

* Camille Mauclair has lately essayed this in the chapter "La Theórie Impressioniste" of his book "L'Impressionisme" ("Librairie de l'Art Ancien and Moderne"), and has succeeded as far as his general thesis is concerned. He is not to be implicitly followed in his grouping of individuals.

MANET: FISHING (LA PÊCHE) 1861
DURAND RUEL COLLECTION

MANET: THE AL FRESCO LUNCHEON (LE DÉJEÛNER SUR L'HERBE) 1863
MOREAU-NÉLATON COLLECTION, PARIS

EDOUARD MANET. PORTRAIT OF COURBET

G. MANET. OLYMPIA

FROM A WOODCUT BY THE PAINTER

MANET: LOLA DE VALENCE 1862

CAMONDO COLLECTION, PARIS

PHOTOGRAPH CAMENTRON

MANET AND HIS CIRCLE

MANET and his friends had two great harbingers—Delacroix and Courbet. Manet, indeed, had yet another of an earlier period, to whom I should have devoted a chapter here, had not others already written of him inimitably. This was Francesco Goya.

None of the colourists of Manet's generation made men forget the colourist Delacroix; everything, or nearly everything, that tends to their glory increases his fame; he was their god. Delacroix' colour had come too early for the weakness of humanity. When the trappings of Romanticism were cleared away, his palette was thrown aside as one of its accessories. After the strong and healthy recognition of reality by the great landscape school of 1830 and the realism of the school of Courbet, painters were impelled to get at a right distance from Nature; this was the logical way between the two manifestations that had come to an end. As soon as it was consciously recognised, the method of Daumier and of Delacroix was necessarily decisive. Why this way is modern, and why it achieves results which respond to vital and weighty needs, I hope at least to indicate in due course. The consciousness of this is a piece of modern culture. It is rooted in the postulate that Manet and his circle gave us not Nature, but the natural, and that all naturalisation of our instincts, *i.e.*, all sharpening, purification, and amelioration, is modern. Every joy is progress, and so therefore was Manet's achievement. That achievement and its results had never occurred even to the magician Rubens, and, going through the whole history of art, we may find something similar, but never quite the same decisive consciousness. There are other values, the perfection of which put us to the blush, but in spite of this we would not exchange for them our own, the resplendent symbol of our best aspirations, our happiness, our epoch.

Manet discovered, to the horrified amazement of the world, that a fine feminine skin is neither yellow nor brown, but luminously white in the light, especially in juxtaposition to dark colours, and that blood pulses, that nerves and senses throb beneath it.

Millet painted the repose of life, and found greatness therein; he transmitted to the simple action he represented a very great and very simple thought, which was expressed in like terms by all his washerwomen, mothers, housewives, and workmen of various kinds, and finally carried conviction by constant repetition of the one sound in so many different forms. It was a generalisation that became the more impressive, the more deliberately it was set forth. In comparison, the realists were clumsy folk, more modest than Millet, for they allowed Nature to think for herself, more presumptuous and more limited, for they expounded what seemed to them the thoughts of Nature in their own narrow fashion.

Manet completed Courbet's material, and refrained from any sort of formulation, in one sense or the other. He made those elements of the material that seemed to him vital to his manner greater and firmer; not in order to subject it the more

intelligibly to an idea, a theory, but rather to make it as vital as possible, capable of producing the effect of unity, and so of style; a strong, original organism, beautiful by that which makes it organic. This is the ancient process common to all great—that is to say, to all instinctive—epochs, when artists were unconscious of any obligation to create for the pleasure of others. Manet discovered a new unity; no new law, as the aberrations of modern criticism would have us believe, but a new means of working out the old law.

He had been educated by an enthusiastic study of the Spaniards and the Venetians. Duret's* statement that Manet's enthusiasm for things Spanish dated from the visit of a troupe of Spanish strollers to Paris contradicts the repeated assertions as to his plagiarisms.

Manet was not the first Frenchman who made the Louvre extend to the Prado. The supersession of the artistic element of Spain by her stronger sister on the other side of the Pyrenees began as soon as French art became natural and independent, no longer "Eighteenth Century," and no longer "Empire." Delacroix foreshadows it, and it becomes more obvious in Daumier and Gavarni. In Courbet it reveals itself decisively. Guys already shows it in Manet's vein. That which served to aggravate the weird decadence of this pioneer, whom we may call the Blake of the Impressionists, was healthily absorbed by Manet, and remained a precious possession to him and his friends. Most of the early Impressionists are half Spaniards—Cézanne in his finest pictures; even Monet when he painted his magnificent female portraits under the influence of Courbet; Renoir in one of the best works of the whole period, *The Naked Boy with the Cat;* Bazille in the fine *Sortie du Bain* of the Centennial Exhibition (1900), the pendant of Manet's *Olympia.* Ribot adopted characteristic traits of his neighbours in another direction. Monticelli even may have made incursions in their domain. In our own day, the Belgian master, Evenepoel, who died a few years ago, followed in Manet's footsteps to Spain. Sargent and Besnard, among others, are unimaginable without Spain. Many obscure painters have travelled on the same road, and to-day the Spanish element is as much a part of the ordinary painting of the boulevard—though there is little enough of Manet in it—as is Otero's dancing a feature of the Variétés repertory. Zuloaga has retaliated a little by taking back to the land of Velazquez what the Frenchmen learned from his great compatriot.

For the men of 1870, the Spanish importation was very much what the Dutch importation had been for those of 1830. But the purposes and forms of the two operations were very dissimilar. That which was due to Manet was as essentially a deliverance, an awakening, as that of 1830 was a suppression, almost a moral lesson. What this latter gave the French genius was something intimate and spiritual; the Dutch material, as such, is rarely apparent in French work; but the Frenchmen who went to Spain painted Spanish pictures as naturally as the Roman Frenchmen had adopted Italian forms.

Nothing could more strongly attest their artistic security than this confident

* In his "Histoire d'Edouard Manet" (Paris: H. Floury, 1902). This biography is especially valuable from the chronological point of view, giving very precise information as to the pictures Manet painted before he saw the Prado. Zola had already referred to the question. In his study in the "Revue du XIXème. Siecle" for 1867 (afterwards republished by Dentu separately, and then again in "Mes Haines") he wrote: "Il est bon de faire savoir que si E. M. a peint des 'espada' et des 'maja,' c'est qu'il avait dans son atelier des vêtements espagnols et qu'il les trouvait beaux de couleur. Il a traversé l'Espagne en 1865 seulement." Manet's most important works, the *Déjeûner sur l'Herbe, Le vieux Musicien, Olympia,* &c., were all painted before his Spanish journey.

JOHN SARGENT: MADAME GAUTREAU

self-surrender. Here again the principle of the preservation of artistic power was omnipotent. A will stronger than that of the individual drove the new to the old, and allowed it to choose, impelled by the unconscious force of dim racial instincts, what was suited to its manner, watched for the moment most favourable to assimilation, rejected, added, and created the right vessel to contain what had been acquired. Goya was the last of the Spaniards, a phenomenon of will and of invention. Like to a harsh, shrill, and wholly disconnected tone, he burst suddenly from the flaccid Spanish art of the day, comparable to a Przybyszewski in contemporary literature; dramatic, disconcerting, full of deep, exacerbated emotions, but, even in the best of his incomprehensible works, the ill-used foundling of a shattered bankrupt civilisation; most poignant in his bitter self-analysis; tried by the loftiest criterion, he seems the frenzy of genius. Goya rushed like a demon upon his unhappy country, and tore the deepest from its depths. After his passage the most precious of its treasures lay together with its rubbish in wild confusion. It was the moment for the merciful and stronger sister to gather up the fragments and to carry the remnant to a new home.

For it needed, setting aside the colour-science of the younger man, the ripe power that Manet added to it, the noble simplicity, the calm coolness, which Goya affects as the pause before the storm, but which is natural to Manet. We are silent before the *Olympia*, whereas before the *Maja* we twitch and quiver. The one excites, the other gives the highest art can give: repose.

This repose conjoined with tension of every faculty is common only to Manet and the greatest of the Spaniards, who lived at a time when the Spanish grandezza was not as yet embittered by irony. But the repose which a Court-painter working in the shadow of a Philip IV. was forced by etiquette to portray, the truth which he drew, almost against their will, from the models imposed on him, such as his superb Innocent X., are more alien to us than the naked exuberance of strength in Manet, who displays all the gifts Velazquez had partly to conceal with a boldness limited only by his own moderation. True, he has not the majesty of the master who painted Las Meñinas; such majesty is not of our period; Whistler has preserved so much of it as may be adapted to present conditions without absurdity. Manet followed after that which Velazquez concealed, without forfeiting that golden sense of harmony in the distribution of effects, which is the greatest glory of his exemplar. The development of modern art, tending, as it does, to leave this ideal farther and farther behind, seems here to have taken an unexpected turn. Since the passing of the Greeks, this repose has only been seen in the Primitives, and with them, it has sometimes more of immobility than of peace; it seem to have been only attainable by sequestration, by withdrawal to the silences of cathedral aisles. It disappeared more and more, as the variety of our increasingly material interests took the artistic form of pictures, and the tumult of daily life penetrated to the temple. And lo! here came one who found dignity and solemnity even in this daily round, steeping triviality in a radiance that transfigures the meanest things; one who appealed to the soul not through the mind but through the eye, and yet discovered secrets. . . .

This art understood what we demand, or imagine we demand from painting, that hybrid, as to which we do not know for whom or for what it exists; understood what it may be to us to-day, in our whirling, rushing present, with its lightning images, its crowded impressions, the swift and continuous succession of which incites our receptive faculties to almost superhuman efforts.

And because nothing is so hateful to it as banality, inertia—because it too adores the moment's grace, the naked fact that may be dealt with successfully once in a thousand times, it foregoes the attempt to moderate its effects. It would rather appear unfinished, if it can only make the happy cast, and concentrate itself in one fortunate moment that belongs wholly to it.

A wit on the staff of *Charivari*, who discovered a sunset by Monet labelled *Impressions* in the first exhibition of the new school held at Nadar's in 1874, thought it a good joke to christen the group Impressionists. The name has survived, its irony has evaporated. It really suggests something of the programme, of course, in a deeper conception, which recognises valuable tendencies in what is apparently arbitrary. It covers the efforts of an art based upon Nature, to avoid the circumlocutions induced by the eclecticism of obsolete traditions, to give painting all possible charms, yet only those proper to its means; and to renounce the making of smooth formulæ, in order to give results the more sharply and strikingly. If the name was new, the thing was old enough; it was the consciousness of those instincts which had governed a Veronese, a Velazquez, a Rubens, the ancestors of these modern masters. Indeed, did not the unknown pagan, who painted the Roman frescoes, of which there are a few fragments in the Vatican Library, foreshadow Impressionism?* In our times, which restrict art more and more to its own domain, a tendency sprang up to create by means that go the deeper, the more fugitive they seem to us in their effects; homœopathic methods of the choicest, instead of the coarser gifts of our forefathers.

The criticism that can do justice to this art must also be Impressionism. As it renounces literature, as it appeals to the eye and not to the intellect, criticism, inviting similar sensations by other means, can give but a vague suggestion thereof. The usual methods of analysis soon fail one here. These pictures lack all direct associative elements. The one thing possible so far in the discussion of these matters, where the eye is not yet susceptible solely to sensuous charm, and words dealing therewith necessarily lack the power of appropriate suggestion, is perhaps to determine the domain in which these influences are worked out. It is already difficult enough to talk about pictures. But in actual conversation, some help is found in gesture, and in the possibility of turning to account every opportunity that may present itself for gaining access to another mind, always provided that one's interlocutor is intelligent enough to desire the greatest of conjoint delights: the mutual enjoyment of a purely æsthetic emotion, unspoilt by any pressure of personal equation. In writing, the one doubtful advantage we enjoy is immunity from interruption. . . . And further, it is obvious that the satisfaction derived from this art can only be relative, not only because the eye of the recipient must always remain an unstable medium, but because even in ideal enjoyment, an unrealisable wish to sound the utmost depths of sensation keeps the mind in continual tension. Few modern works leave us with nothing to desire, and this is their secret charm; like wise women, they never give themselves altogether.

And if one can appreciate what they withhold, and see how they strive to approach ever nearer to unattainable beauty by fresh and vernal paths, can one ever weary of following them on their way, no longer as a spectator, but almost as a collaborator, in the vain hope of being able to co-operate with

* The exquisite *Triumph of Amor*, in particular, is freer, lovelier and more poetical than anything these fragments suggested to the painters of the Renaissance.

MANET: TOILERS OF THE SEA 1874

FAURE COLLECTION, PARIS

PHOTOGRAPH CAMENTRON

the eye, and to win clear indications of their bliss from that which they have won?

It is necessary to have read the great poets, and the power of enjoying Beethoven is a very desirable possession; it has been asserted that familiarity with Nietzsche is essential and a comprehension of Dostojewskij favourable to culture. We ought to be quite certain that children are not brought by storks, and every man should know something of our social conditions, that he may not fall under the wheels. I do not hesitate to pronounce the appreciation of this French art created by Manet no less beneficial. Of course, be it understood, for him who has the mind for it. Art is not an essential for all. Bismarck got on very well without it, and the majority of rulers carry on the business of government competently enough without its help. Less than ever do we need it in these days, when the joy of living is purchased at the cost of so much pain; there are weightier things. But if a man's disposition leads him to interest himself in art, if the individual allows himself to enjoy at the expense of others, if within the sphere of the abstract, after due care for material values, there should still be a desire for satisfactions other than those of the stomach, this is the painting, if any, that we must acclaim. We may dismiss once for all the famous tight-rope philosophy which declares that every manner has its pros and cons, that Manet is a fine painter and Böcklin too, that it is possible to admire both, and that both work to the same ends in their different ways. What we must rather recognise is, that Manet is painting, and Böcklin something else. This something may be loftier, it may seem to us Germans more Germanic, and may furnish themes to the poets; even from the artistic side it may have its value as a stimulant to decorative art, but with the typical art that we reverence as painting, not merely because it is beautiful, but because it is a living portion of ourselves, it has absolutely nothing to do. Böcklin is an unrivalled creator of fanciful conceptions, often highly original, in which the pictorial element is the most arbitrary quality. Manet created a vast collective idea out of the purely pictorial; all that this art, at which centuries have worked, can give. His sole aim was to give to our senses—and to these alone—the most beautiful impressions, the most beautiful material, the loveliest colour, a concentration of all that we find scattered and intermingled in Nature. This concentration of arbitrary elements, this unerring knowledge, directed to the greatest possible simplification of the main sensuous effect, is the personal quality, not the invention or the fancy, which are by no means sharply distinguished from those of other men. What interests us in the *Faure*, or the *Youth playing the Flute*, the hundred portraits of more or less famous contemporaries, or the many flower-pieces? Manet's one essay in anecdotic painting, the *Murder of the Emperor Maximilian*, is hardly one of his most successful efforts. But let us just make the experiment of hanging one of those flower-pieces of which Manet painted dozens, side by side with one of the most exuberant Böcklins, into which the painter crowded everything the boldest fancy could have dreamed. At a first glance, the handful of flowers will pass unnoticed, and all eyes will be riveted on the horsemen, the cliffs, the extraordinary animals; every one will want to know what is happening here, and what the man who painted all this was really thinking about. But when we have once grasped it, our interest dies down, slowly but surely; the understanding reposes, satisfied with its work, proudly conscious that it may place this event also ad acta. The senses have played a purely subsidiary part. Then the weary eye falls upon the flowers, and every one who cares for flowers at all will feel a hitherto

untouched chord vibrating in his soul. The agreeable sensation he has hitherto enjoyed at the sight of flowers is suddenly intensified in a mysterious fashion. He has not the whole of the living flower before him—perfume, motion, all that is indispensable in Nature is lacking—and yet there is something here, of which he scarcely dreamed, or which he perhaps dimly wished for, in the natural blossom: a charm that conquers mortal fragility and evanescence, and does not approach us too closely, in spite of its strength; that avoids the dangers of the extremes in Nature, and does not follow up enjoyment by regret or disgust. Here the eyes feel no fatigue, and the understanding also seems to rest. Something else works upon us through the eye, clarifies, calms, breathes exquisite tones into our being, evokes sensations we have never felt before, yet which fill us with a kind of familiar delight, waxes stronger and stronger, newer and richer, until we see only the two or three flowers, before whose quiet power the frenzy of the other picture pales to something meagre and remote. This is not because flowers are lovelier than charges of cavalry or combats of Tritons. An earlier master whom Böcklin honoured, Titian, also painted such wild scenes. There is in the Uffizi a cavalry skirmish, which could scarcely be wilder or more frenzied; this, again, has this curious dual life; and when we look at it, the physical elements retire altogether and we admire the power and vitality of the art, not of the horses and riders.

The art of all the glorious tradition inaugurated by Manet lies in a profound grasp of some small bit of life. Herein lies the beauty we may look for in the present day, the result of the beautiful, the consciousness of delight that inspires us in the enjoyment of perfect works. The world has become very much uglier since the Venus of Milo was produced, but we shall not make it more beautiful by imitating her form. We cannot get round life; we must make our way through it. When we really know it, when we realise whence its forms arise, and what purposes they serve, we shall love it. Manet's realism is a symbol of our instinct of self-preservation. He did not record this or that beauty, but ours; he showed that we may be dignified even in trousers, that beauty is fluid, that it does not dwell in this or that, but in everything, and more especially among all things. A Rembrandt found it even in the entrails of the slaughtered ox that hangs in the Louvre.

That which oppresses us in life is not the ugliness of certain phenomena, not vice and malice and misery, but the darkness in which we live, our inability to avoid the shock because we are not prepared for it, the stupidly animal, undisciplined nature of our experience. And this very "Impressionism" that aims at higher knowledge may be acquired from Manet. The greatness that lies in his pictures is fragmentary, but even in fragments it gives perfection. It aims at simplification, that it may give in a single stroke—the elementary, fundamental stroke, which the freely handled brush of genius lays on the canvas—a thousand strokes, the average of all. It is great in itself, because all it touches develops into the strongest expression of its manner, because everything it sees is seen with such unapproachable certainty that our consciousness reposes in the shadow of a consciousness belonging to one stronger, greater, and richer than ourselves. The marvel is that this something greater lives among us, with us, in us, without seducing us by objective symbolism. The famous *Nana* is perhaps the most convincing document for the expressive power of the non-essential. It is difficult to imagine anything more pungent in the shallowest sense than this boudoir-scene, from which Zola's novel has taken every possible element of ambiguity. Yet

MANET : BEFORE THE MIRROR (DEVANT LA PSYCHÉ) 1876

PHOTOGRAPH DURAND-RUEL

nothing could be greater, and the most pious Mantegna is not more worthy of honour than this coquettish beast in corsets and lace petticoat. This is the true Naturalism, which, like Nature herself, reveals the wonders of creation in the lowest things, and Zola's famous phrase, which became its gospel, is only true if we take the "coin de la nature" for as little, and the "tempérament" for as much as possible.

It is not only that Manet's Naturalism was more sympathetic than that of his friend Zola, however little the latter may deserve the depreciation of some youthful poets, which has a touch of the sourness of certain historic grapes. The difference may lie, perhaps, only in the difference of calling, and in the fact that Zola was not only a titanic worker, but also a "brave citoyen" whose intentions are not always in happy harmony with those of the artist. His origin, too, was obvious: Balzac and Taine are more familiar to us than Velazquez and Goya; it is easier to talk his language, though none has so far shown a like talent in its use; his technique is more transparent, though it will be long before his plastic symbolism is surpassed. Manet was only a painter, but he was this to such purpose that he has inclined us to look upon colour and brush-stroke as the highest instruments of divine inspiration. His bequest is incomparably greater than Zola's. In its own domain it is hardly to be measured, and it extends far beyond this domain, directly we permit this art to serve for other standards as well as its own. From him, an aristocrat to his finger-tips. our generation, the few who feel themselves to be a generation in these days, learned to shun what is paltry and to love what is noble. The natural vigour, that in Millet was combined with a trace of proletarian ignorance and with obvious technical limitations, was in Manet the consequence of an infallible creative power, able to do everything, but doing only that which beseemed it.

This gives the measure also of Manet's superiority to Courbet. It is essential to get a clear idea of their relative positions, not in order to arrive at a cheap and misleading pronouncement as to their absolute values, but to understand the development to which both contributed, the most important development of our age. The temperament of the master of Ornans was robuster than that of the creator of the *Olympia*, stronger, if unconsciousness be an element of strength, for, indeed, all Courbet's adoption of Proudhon's theories implied self-depreciation. Manet had the greater intellect, the higher taste, the finer culture, and was the superior of the two in his sagacious use of his medium. He appears as the higher manifestation of Courbet, purified but stripped of certain advantages in the process. He subdued the animality of Courbet, but he never produced works so moving as the *Enterrement* and *La Vague*. The *Olympia* and the *Déjeûner sur l'Herbe*, in which, moreover, there are obvious traces of the predecessor, contain a decorative art, which, as such, minimises the degree of dramatic directness, which Courbet achieved in his happiest moments. The notion of thinking of nothing but Nature made the peasant Courbet strong. He made use of the old masters without premeditation, like an artisan, as suitable means to an end, concerning which he gave himself up to rudimentary ideas, but which he commanded instinctively. Manet recognised his end clearly. In him, as in Delacroix, temperament and knowledge combined to form a rare weapon. He saw a new and logical ideal before him, requiring not only nature, vigour, and power of impression, but also taking thought for the concentration of the impression, and seeking beauty even in the elements of the picture. Hence his

harmonious colour, his beautiful surface, we might almost say, his beautiful models. Manet's colour, most splendid in his latest works, is colour-art, purer, more essentially effective than Courbet's tone-painting. The latter took the vapourous brown of Velazquez' background; Manet took his rare contrasts, and developed them further, without renouncing the rest. There are no passages in Manet's later pictures which do not harmonise melodiously, whereas Courbet neglected the inner parts of many of his surfaces, nay, sometimes killed them by too much black. Manet may be the lesser force, but he applied this force more effectively and placed it more resolutely at the service of his æsthetics. He carried generalisation much further. In some of Courbet's pictures individual planes have the effect of large luminous spots in the darkness. They are comparatively isolated, and are brought together only by repetition of the colour and by the relation of the masses. Manet, in spite of a scheme of colour comprising much stronger contrasts, creates a homogeneous, and apparently fluid material. No one ever laid to heart the truth that no thing, no being of any kind, exists alone, but always appears surrounded by space, by light, and by air, to more brilliant purpose than Manet. He painted with a single sweep of the brush not only his details, but his whole picture, thus providing for the utmost harmony—in other words, produced the appearance of material nature in the most natural manner possible. Manet and Courbet stand for soul and body. The mind of the spectator soars as on wings before Manet's pictures, while the greatness of Courbet's creations almost oppresses it. Courbet's genius is great by its terrestrial elements. Manet's might be likened to some magic fluid, in which the eyes bathe and henceforth see only beauty.

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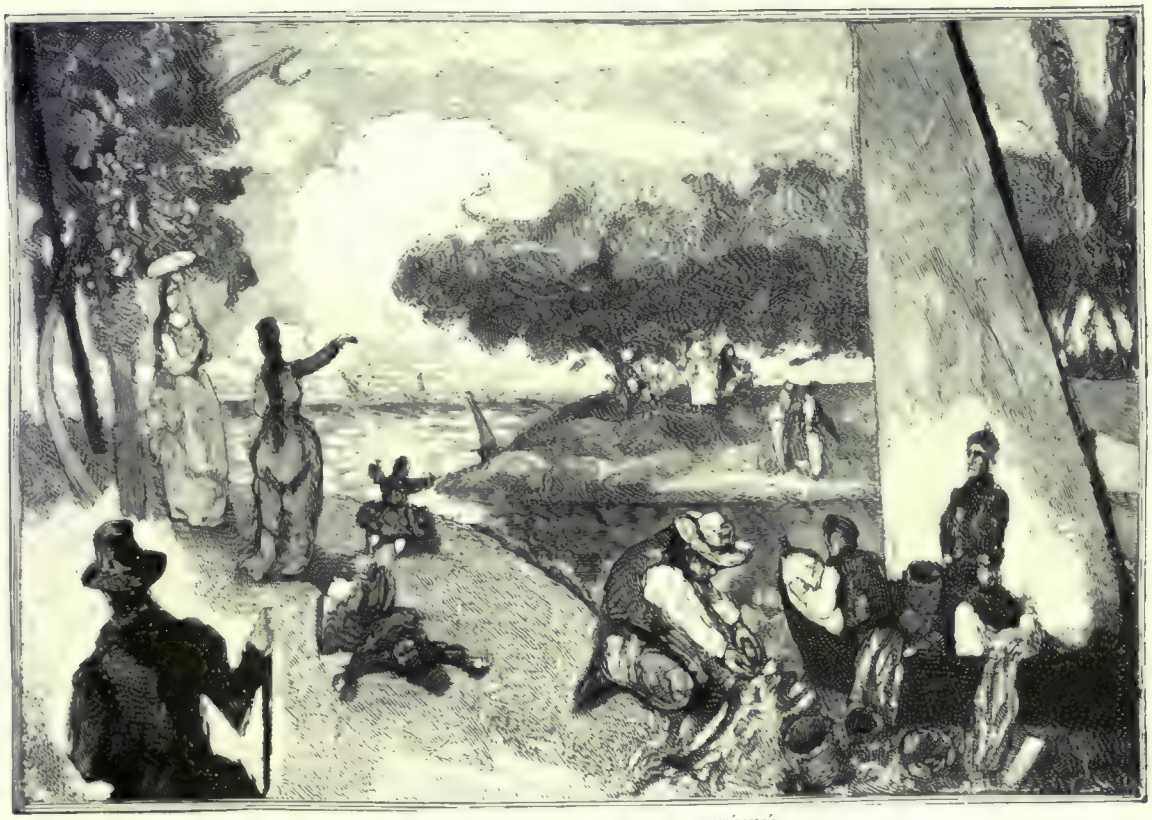
Courbet had cleft the earth with mighty strokes of the spade, and bequeathed us not only brilliant works, but the possibility of a new conception of Nature. Manet realised this possibility beyond all expectation, and in spite of all he owed to Courbet and to others, appears as the more harmonious, the more fruitful artist. To the early end of his days, he created out of a rich abundance. When he could no longer walk, he consoled himself in his arm-chair with the gem-like art of his still-life pieces. These he might fitly have called "arrangements"; arrangements of life, like everything else he touched. His vases of flowers recall Delacroix' natures mortes; the loveliest of these little gems hang in the Salle Thomy Thierry. We feel inclined to fall on our knees before two of them, the *Roger délivrant Angélique* and the *Fiancée d'Abydos*. We know not which to admire most, Manet's still-life pieces, which have the effect of historical pictures, or Delacroix' historical pictures, which look like still-life pieces.

Manet's doctrine was the recognition of painting as flat decoration; the ruthless suppression of all those elements used by the old masters to seduce the eye by plastic illusion; and the deliberate insistence on all the pictorial elements in their stead. The relative nature of such axioms can only be determined by examples, and we shall presently find in Leibl an antithesis that will give the necessary opportunity for a demonstration.

Manet's most vigorous precursor in these principles was Rubens, and every artist who, as a painter, was mainly concerned with painting, had at least foreshadowed his convictions. He recognised this continuity with the clairvoyance of genius, and propagated his creed like an apostle. This was the point of attack



CÉZANNE: A SUNDAY IN SUMMER (DIMANCHE D'ÉTÉ)

WOODCUT FROM THE PICTURE IN THE HESSEL COLLECTION, PARIS

for the notorious hostility that assailed him; not his colour, for Delacroix had accustomed his contemporaries to this, but his apparent indifference to all constructive detail. In his insufferable study on Manet, Albert Wolff records the humorous repartees exchanged between the two great champions of the day, Courbet and Manet. Courbet declared the *Olympia* was like the Queen of Spades coming from the bath! Manet retorted that Courbet's ideal was a billiard-ball! Manet, as Wolff further relates, went so far as to vote against the award of a medal to Puvis de Chavannes, because he could model an eye! * Not only was such a feat but the very capacity to commit it, a crime in his eyes!

Thus must differences be emphasised, it seems, to give birth to schools!

* " La Capitale de l'Art " (Paris : Havard). Courbet said : " C'est plat, ce n'est pas modelé, on dirait une dame de pique d'un jeu de cartes sortant du bain ! " Ce à quoi Manet, toujours prêt à la riposte, répondit : " Courbet nous embête enfin avec ses modelés ; son idéal à lui, c'est une bille de billard ! "

. . . Quand il s'est agi de donner la médaille d'honneur à Puvis . . . Manet s'ecria en plein Salon : " Jamais je ne voterai pour un homme qui sait modeler un œil ! "

EDOUARD MANET. PORTRAIT OF GUYS.

FROM A WOODCUT BY BELTRAND.

CÉZANNE AND HIS CIRCLE

PAUL CÉZANNE

Cézanne was the boldest spirit in the circle of the Ecole de Batignolles that gathered round Manet. The essential principle among all of them was not colour—this varied in every case—but flat painting as opposed to modelling in paint. In this Cézanne surpassed even the leader of the group. We may take it for granted that in periods of evolution the matter round which the efforts of all revolve will be fermenting at the same moment in individual minds, and that he who is most articulate will become the leader of the rest. For this position Cézanne was in no sense fitted. He was a very reserved person; of the younger generation none ever saw him; artists who owe him everything never exchanged a word with him. His very existence has been doubted. Since his sojourn with Dr. Gachet he has never, as far as I know, left the South of France. He lives, I have heard, at Aix. Gachet describes him as the exact antithesis of Van Gogh, utterly incapable of formulating his purposes, absolutely unconscious, a bundle of instincts, which he was anxious not to dissipate.

The result with him was a purely sensuous form of art. He gave what he could and what he would, not a fraction more, and in external things not even so much as this. Occasionally he did not even trouble himself to cover over certain small blank spots on his pictures, and these are the despair of honest owners nowadays—others paint them over. But this superficial defect is really nothing more nor less than the frayed out corner of a splendid old tapestry. Sometimes, indeed, the whole tapestry is reduced to the warp. And even with this we cannot quarrel, for the fabric is always lovely, even when it shows but a few threads.

Cézanne's whole character made for obscurity. It never occurred to him to sign his pictures, like Guys and Van Gogh; he never gave any sign of life beyond pictures, and these had to be taken from him almost by force. Small wonder, therefore, that he was an old man before it occurred to a few of his friends and compatriots to notice him. It is only for the last few years that he has begun to count at all in the art market. Like Van Gogh, he owes this recognition to the little shop in the Rue Lafitte owned by Vollard, one of those remarkable dealers only produced by Paris, who are sometimes better connoisseurs, or, rather, have surer artistic instincts, than the connoisseurs themselves. The event that established his reputation was his friend Choquet's sale at Petit's in the summer of 1899. For three hot afternoons in the middle of the dead season, when there is not a soul in Paris, purchasers fought for his best things, collected by an oddity who had been laughed at as a madman a short time before.

If this enthusiasm was not merely a frantic outburst of snobbery, it was remarkable enough. For, if we except Van Gogh, no one in modern art has

CÉZANNE: THE RAPE (L'ENLÈVEMENT)
PHOTOGRAPH DURAND RUEL

CÉZANNE: THE AL FRESCO LUNCHEON (LE DÉJEUNER SUR L'HERBE) 1865
VOLLARD GALLERY, PARIS

made stronger demands on æsthetic receptivity than Cézanne. Analysing him, we find Courbet, Delacroix, Daumier, and the Dutchmen. Sometimes we might suppose that he had known the old Am. Gautier, Murger's friend, who painted such magnificent still-life pieces. But, in addition to all this, we are astonished by something quite different, something enigmatic, that from a distance strikes us as positive insanity. There is enlargement, and we cannot rightly say what is enlarged. All art is exaggeration in some sense; but here we are conscious that the sense is hidden. Looking at the arched back of a fine black cat, I have sometimes a very agreeable sensation. What produces it? Not only colour, for there is no contrast in the fur; a tactile emotion is combined with pleasure in the intense velvety black of the various almost imperceptible hairs. It sometimes happens that the cat is in a room or against a wall of some pale colour. Her eyes are gleaming through the fur, though I do not see them, and the slender legs are moving imperceptibly. All this makes up the black of the cat's fur.

But how can such effects be produced in a picture? The latent tactile impulse, which plays no inconsiderable part in the preference of cat-lovers, cannot be reckoned with here, and yet the sense of pleasure I feel is even stronger. There is no movement; the subject before me is a simple still-life; and yet I feel something in the pupil of my eye quivering, as if set in motion by some movement taking place in a higher dimension. Here again, we miss the accidental effect produced by the wall of the room, which was so favourable to the cat, because it afforded a number of little contrasts for the black; we have only a large, flat surface enclosed in a frame, and yet in the three or four tints of the picture we find a wealth of gradually increasing contrasts. The colour-theory of the moderns will not help us here. The Bernheims have things that prove the exact opposite: black pictures; a green coffee-pot and a green jar on a shelf against a gray wall. The shadows are inky black, and this not fortuitously; they are like huge black rags, forming the chief value. In the Hessel collection six Cézannes hang on one wall—one of the wonders of the world, where the most heterogeneous objects combine to produce an effect as of Gobelin tapestry. One feels that the frames are unnecessary, that the pictures might be sewn together without destroying their essential value. Cézanne's system of colour may be compared to a kind of kaleidoscope, in which what we see has been shaken together, and so shaken that mosaic-pictures are produced, amazing in their vigourous contrasts of colour. The relations seem to rise almost accidentally, and yet the coherence of the whole is almost supernatural. His harmonies are so strong, one is tempted to believe that to colour, and colour only, a like convincing power has been given as to rhythmic line. He sometimes makes use of a composition with an apparent pleasure in banality; accident could hardly send a couple of pears and apples rolling across the table more carelessly than he has placed them; there is no trace of arrangement or intention. His still-life pictures are so much alike that they are often barely distinguishable one from another. How often he has painted the absurd crumpled napkin, with the plate, the jar and the fruit! And yet, every time I see one of these pieces I feel as if I had been looking at some amazing primitive sculptures or something akin to them. The effects he produces are primitive, though he makes no effort to this end; primitive, in so far as they give us that icy sense of grandeur which we enjoy in the contemplation of ancient masterpieces; he achieves style without the help of line, and solely by means of this magical mosaic of colour, which—it seems almost absurd to say so—expresses

only exact realities. This is the most amazing part of the whole thing; this mosaic impresses us by its minute fidelity to Nature. Cézanne's apples are painted like Velazquez' costumes, with that absolute directness which admits of no modification. He has nothing of the revolutionary, save perhaps in some of his nude studies in the open air, in which Daumier's influence is apparent. He is much quieter than Van Gogh afterwards was; his brushing is less vehement; his impasto is thin in comparison with that of Van Gogh. He has still less in common with the colour-division of the Neo-Impressionists; his methods are rather those of the Dutchmen; one might almost take him for an indirect descendant of Vermeer. He paints life as Vermeer painted a carpet. But the melody for which the Dutchmen used many-toned, complicated chords, Cézanne produces by means of stronger, purer single notes. And as I have said, he is never concerned to make an agreeable impression. His "academies" look like lumps of rough-hewn flesh. Anatomy seems to be treated with lordly contempt; and yet these blocks of flesh live. In his rainy landscapes all Nature seems to be floating away, and yet there is none of that realistic dexterity with which recognised landscape painters make rain as wet as possible. He never painted a ray of reflected sunshine, and yet there is a light in his pictures that is dangerous to works hung beside them. He belongs to the generation of Manet and is the gospel of the younger painters. They call him the sage. The altar at which he himself worships is Delacroix, as we may see from his copies after the painter of the *Medea*. He expresses what we divine in Delacroix; he takes from him what Delacroix took from Rubens, when he copied the great Fleming, and what Rubens found, when he copied the Italians. How the one reproduced the other is the history of painting of our new art.

Cézanne was born in 1839, a year after Zola. Zola owned some of his early pictures, painted between 1860–1870, when his friend was still under the immediate influence of Delacroix' Romanticists. At the Zola sale, Vollard bought the large and superb *Enlèvement* of 1865, a romantic episode, though the episode lay rather in the bold design than in the subject. Cézanne's début may be placed at about the year 1858. This was the date of Vollard's *Donkey*, a little grisaille that might have been painted in the seventeenth century by the brothers Le Nain, and a number of nondescript Dutch scenes, which the artist may have copied from some of the little masters in the Marseilles Gallery. As early as 1859 the real Cézanne was foreshadowed in the richly painted *Femme au Perroquet*, also in Vollard's possession. A woman at an open window holds a parrot on her hand. The vehement handling suggests some vagrant disciple of Frans Hals, though such an one would never have achieved the very free treatment of the foliage that overhangs the window. A number of small landscapes, many of them on panel, belong to this period, or a little later. They are palette-exercises, recognisable as the work of Cézanne, even for those who have never seen such early things by him. The brushing has already his peculiar vigour of touch, although it was not yet applied to concrete things.

The greatness of Cézanne was manifested between 1860 and 1870, when, under the purely superficial influence of Courbet, he painted his magnificent black portraits and still-life subjects, one of which I have described. Then came the Auvers time, about 1870. In company with Pissarro and Vignon he painted in Daubigny's favourite district those beautiful landscapes, the broadest and most vigorous works of his maturity. They are akin to the contemporary Pissarros, which will perhaps some day be ranked above all this artist's later work, so rich

CÉZANNE: STILL-LIFE

BERNHEIM COLLECTION, PARIS

in tone, so full of a passionate worship of colour are they. Cézanne's have more virility, more severity of arrangement, greater boldness in the masses. A healthy tincture of Courbet clung to him all his days. He never lost the vigour of structure, that stimulates like champagne in his best pictures. He followed Pissarro in that development to high tones, which Monet enjoined. It is obvious that Cézanne never troubled himself so much about a revolution in technique as the other Impressionists. Without Pissarro he would probably have gone on quietly painting his blacks, and it is possible that his artistic importance would hardly have suffered. Like Manet, he breathed his own individuality into every technique, and made it significant. By this means he retained the originality which evaporated somewhat with Monet and Pissarro in successive technical evolutions. Monet, too, was never so powerful as during the seventies. We can never be grateful enough to him for the immense refinement of method we owe him, but it cost him something of his strength. Cézanne is said to have expressed himself very brilliantly about Monet, in dicta that prove his conviction of the advantages of the new manner; he was certainly no innovator himself, but followed quietly after the rest, only to make use of his own marvellous eye more efficiently than any of the others. In a transition period rich in charm, he painted his memorable aerial studies, sketches in which only one thing is complete, the atmosphere. Count Kessler's picture, one of the finest, was probably painted between 1880 and 1885, the master's most prolific period. Compared with that of the earlier landscapes, the palette is much purer. The colour is laid on very thinly, the whitish grey of the canvas showing through everywhere, especially in the foreground, where a thin green is lightly applied, almost like a wash of water-colour. Where the trees are growing, we see a light road, in which the tone of the canvas is merely enriched by pale yellow, gray, and faint touches of blue; then again we have a green field, flecked with touches of stronger green, but on the whole of exactly the same tone as the foreground. It is separated from the field behind it by the relatively rich gradations of the low green bushes. This richness justifies the pronounced orange of the field, which resolves itself into lighter tones in the background. The façade of the little house is of the same tone as the road near the trees, rather more strongly tinged with yellow, the roof is of the same brick orange as the fields. An airy blue pervades the wide sky, and struggles for mastery with the tone of the ground, which shows through plainly above the green tree-tops.

The transparence of these varied tints, the cohesion of their variety, and the wave-like structure of the chromatically equal planes, produce the illusion of air, which we seem almost to breathe in from these Cézannes.

It is but a step from these to the pictures of 1886, in which the sketches are transformed into works of masterly completeness.

We cannot see Provence without thinking of Cézanne. He paints it with a positive fanaticism, inventing a peculiar style of painting to express its peculiar character. It stands out sharply before our eyes, and we seem to be recognising innumerable details in the pictures. As a fact, again, it is only colour and air, and a structure of little brush-strokes, by which the wonderful land is still more wonderfully recreated. Here, too, he shows a certain likeness to Pissarro, in the very limited degree possible to artists so different in temperament. Like Manet, Cézanne went on adding to his artistic treasure; but he never cast away what he had once acquired, and even here he still has something of Delacroix. The

grandiose Romanticism, that was an element in his immense black still-life pieces, had, of course, disappeared before a system of greater refinement; but the essence of Delacroix, his extraordinary vivacity of touch, his structural use of colour, remained. It was just at this time that Pissarro's handling became uniform; he was approaching his period of Neo-Impressionism. The variety with which Cézanne applied his little brush-strokes sets all systems at defiance, and yet is systematic in the highest sense. The instinct that always guided him, gave to him here in rich abundance, and we enjoy his pictures with a kind of physical instinct. He paints the warmth of his home, and we feel a glow as we look at his landscapes; he shows us the parched red earth, under which we divine the hard stone, burning with the accumulated fire of centuries. How grateful is the luxuriant vegetation beside this flaming sunshine, the green that overspreads the ground like cooling waters! The eternal heavens sink down behind it, in all the tones of purest sapphire. The earth is but a puny interruption of this everlasting blue.

In these pictures, which at first sight may seem unimportant in comparison to the more dramatic early works, in this trickling together of colours to form a perfectly natural picture, in the purity of the palette which is restricted to red, orange, blue, and green, and expresses every gradation with the utmost richness and the perfect harmony of a perfectly natural taste, Cézanne's art achieves its highest triumph. It was here that Van Gogh learned how red flows out of orange. Duret owns a superb little Cézanne of this period, *Les Terres Rouges*, and two of the most remarkable Van Goghs that may be accounted a direct continuation of the older master; sulphur-coloured houses with deep blue roofs and light blue smoke, round which flame woods of purple-red trees. They are tapestries, worked in yellow and blue and notably in red, painted quite flat—which was unusual in his case—encircled in a frankly decorative fashion with uniform red outlines which enclose the exquisite purple tones in gleaming fire.

PIERRE BONNARD: THE BOULEVARD

PHOTOGRAPH DRUET

VUILLARD. BONNARD. ROUSSEL

No member of the school of Cézanne has succeeded in surpassing the master. But, where there is no teacher, it is inaccurate to talk of a school. It was not by spoken words that the seed was sown in this case. Nor is it Cézanne alone who leads the youth of France. Renoir, Fantin, and, once again, Delacroix, divide their homage. If I have, nevertheless, spoken of the School of Cézanne in this connection, it is because certain essential aims of the younger men at least reveal the influence of Cézanne, and because this inter-relation is the sole bond of union between a number of very dissimilar painters. The three friends of Maurice Denis, to whom the following all too brief chapter is devoted, should not be grouped with Denis, Vallotton, and Gauguin's circle, to whom their relation is but superficial; they should be considered quite apart from this society. It is true that like these, they started from synthesis, and claimed at first to be purely decorative artists; each of them worked as an ornamentist, and even as an industrial artist. But this reaction with them was but a recoil, enabling them to rush forward more impetuously on the path of purely pictorial art. They have, as a fact, far more in common with those great masters we have called the pillars of modern painting, save that they lack all trace of that element of Courbet which is perceptible in these their predecessors. The animal strain is altogether foreign to their manner. As opposed to it, they might be called "spirituels." This gives them the aspect of decadents as compared with the others. And they are in fact decadents, in the same sense as their forerunners, and all modern painters are decadent more or less; and in a greater degree than the others, their painting lacks the strong support of a clearly defined tendency, and of a teacher. But tradition works in their highly developed instinct, and their taste enables them to profit by it. In their technique, however, they are more remote from the old masters, less methodical even than Renoir, who is said to have once despairingly confided to an acquaintance that he had no notion how to paint, and was inclined to give up art altogether, as he could not get beyond dilettantism—or than Cézanne, whose spleen led him to take his place in a student's class at Aix to learn drawing. All this is less incomprehensible than it sounds. It seems absurd in relation to our admiration for their works; but it seems natural to them in relation to their admiration for the old masters. Their modesty blinds them to the necessary compensations of development.

The old masters utter well-turned phrases; as compared with these, the words of the nineteenth-century leaders sound like suppressed exclamations; the younger men speak in interjections. And yet they echo back to us; that is the marvellous part of it. We may ask ourselves which is the greater miracle—the pictures evolved from the bearish vigour of Courbet, or the harmonies that breathe from the trembling essays of these young men.

They are all young still, born about the year 1865, are for the most part of the same age—Vuillard is a year younger than Bonnard and Roussel—and made

their début early in the nineties, when Denis organised a modest exhibition of his own works and those of his friends at St. Germain. Parisians made their acquaintance through Le Barc de Boutteville, and afterwards in the exhibitions of Les Indépendants, to which they have remained faithful contributors. They are habitually classed together, because they studied together* and developed together. But this development was worked out on very dissimilar lines, diverging more and more with years.

All three bear the same relation to Cézanne as did Fantin-Latour to Delacroix. They are another genus, less grandiose, though no less artistic, of smaller dimensions, showing more sympathy with the large kakemono than with the modest engraving. The great simplicity of the elders desired a decisive form of expression, in which there is always something of the combative spirit that drove them to the Salon des Refusés. The younger men are impelled less to fight for watchwords than to collect with all diligence, to enlarge and widen their aims, to keep their eyes on what lies near them, and also on what is far off.

Cézanne was translated into more intimate terms by them. All three retained his mosaic-like technique; it seems, indeed, to have become more deliberate in their hands. The pattern is changed; the stitches are smaller, but at the same time more evident. We see how the thing is done. The mysterious element in Cézanne becomes more comprehensible; the means are used so unerringly that the effect can be demonstrated. There is no genius as yet in the matter, but an extraordinary amount of talent; their technical development affords a parallel to the progress the Neo-Impressionists owed to Monet. Vuillard, the one whose works are most in demand to-day, remains the still-life painter. He used human beings in the composition of his still-life pieces, but the fact that they are numan beings is not the important thing in the composition. All things seem to serve him merely to enrich his palette. He groups them, and they seem to disappear in the process; in the little interiors he affects we see at first only walls, windows, furniture, curtains, and such-like. The figures are hardly necessary, we divine their presence from the surroundings. No artist has ever so suggested the soul of an interior—the sense of habitation. There are people who see in him only the gifted colourist and hieroglyphist, and it is possible that he desires no higher fame himself; the unconscious charm of his art is all the more fascinating for this. We enjoy the same sort of intimacy with him as in conversation with certain agreeable people, when the talk results in a mutual perception of subtle things, when thoughts no longer require words for their interchange, and we are silent lest we should disturb them. We are sometimes reminded of little sketches by Whistler; but when Whistler gives himself up to pleasant intimations, Vuillard begins to paint. There is always something in the background with him. It is possible to have one of his interiors in the house for a month, and one fine day to discover a figure in the corner, and not only a figure, but a whole story. Not a story that can be told in words, be it understood; they are painted corners. His finest and simplest pictures—those which entitle him to rank among the modern decorative masters—are in tempera.

There are superficial observers, who cannot distinguish Bonnard from Vuillard. The two have as much in common as André Theuriet and Pierre Louys; they both speak French. It might be possible to confuse them, if technique were really everything, and if all that lay behind it were meaningless. Bonnard is the poet of

* At Julian's under Bouguereau and Robert-Fleury; Vuillard was also at the Ecole des Beaux Arts for a very short time under Gérôme.

PIERRE BONNARD: UNE APRES-MIDI BOURGEOISE

PROPERTY OF THE ARTIST

the two. He makes the most ordinary things into delicious songs. Vuillard is a perfectly simple soul, with delicate senses, who traced out his own circle very distinctly. Bonnard has surprises in store for us. He seems to have desired everything, and to have been capable of many things.

He has no special material peculiar to himself, but everything he touches he treats in some novel fashion; he is racier than Vuillard—not so quiet and comforting, but when he grasps a thing, he does so with more intensity. He seems to paint with nerves, as the other does with senses. His landscapes quiver and tremble with life. He does not meditate his effects like Vuillard, but thinks with gestures that become pictures. We find marvellous ornaments in his surfaces, which he disdains to make more comprehensible than they happen to be; his pictures are often more luminous than Vuillard's. He loves the race-courses round Paris in misty weather, painting exquisite tones by way of accompaniment to the tiny red and blue particles of the jockeys' silk jackets, like artistic settings round gems. And then again he veils his thickets in the grayest green, and in the shadow sets yellow tones dancing one with another, borne by tiny amoretti. In certain nudes in the open air he uses Cézanne's studies of flesh-tones to make decorations of the nude more rhythmic than Cézanne's, more piquant, more stimulating. Both the friends shine as lithographers, and their prints, which they execute themselves at Clot's workshops, demonstrate not only their charm as colourists, but also how much their very individual handling—as distinguished from colour—adds to the beauty of their pictures. Bonnard, in spite of his versatility, seems to have set aims more fixed and definite before him, which might finally lead him to wall decoration on a grand scale. He has already worked on larger panels in collaboration with Vuillard and Denis, which unfortunately were never set up in their destined place; and in the two tripartite pictures of the Hessel collection, notably the exquisite symphony in blue, where the life of the Boulevard Clichy dimples like a bunch of roses, we divine a yearning to expand, and to get effects in larger dimensions. Both in Vuillard and in Bonnard we find traces of the influence of Lautrec, who essayed a slighter technique in order to win greater flexibility.

Bonnard's most brilliant achievement so far is the large oblong panel, the garden scene of the Salon of 1903, certainly one of the most important pictures of the whole generation, a work that throws Vallotton's beautiful but subdued panel by Vuillard quite into the shade. Once more it is a portrait-group, but not of the kind the masterly possibilities of which Fantin showed. At this Vallotton tried his hand in a portrait-group in the same Salon, where the young men of this generation are gathered, as were the Impressionists in Fantin's picture.*

Rather does it recall that more seriously conceived group, which rendered not persons, but something of humanity, and was refused by the Jury just forty years ago. Before the *Déjeûner sur l'Herbe* the spectator received two or three shocks, which excited either enthusiasm or abhorrence, and sometimes both. Bonnard has multiplied the shocks: they are less violent, but they produce the curious oscillation that follows rhythm. This very remarkable family is certainly calculated to irritate the plain man; the father on the chaise-longue, the boy bolt upright beside him, the portly matron, the girl gazing thoughtfully at the cat, and the avuncular straw-hat in the foreground—all these invite the shafts of

* Ironically enough, round Cottet! We reproduce Bonnard's group.

cheap ridicule. But the effect is always the same; and to one it is grotesque, to another full of tender poetry.

The fragmentary character of the *Déjeûner* has undergone a complete change here. Even Manet could not refrain from a glance at the remarkable pictures his brush set down, when he ordered it to paint men and women, green trees and other beautiful things. Would he have pleased us better, if he had painted these things more with an eye to objective truth than as pictures, if he had been less fragmentary in the one case, more in the other?

Bonnard carries the Manetian principle to an extreme in his picture; he banished every particle of shadow, and filled all the depths with marvellous colour. As a colourist, Manet triumphs by his brushing, by his breadth; in actual colour the *Déjeûner* is somewhat poor. Bonnard has shaken together such a wealth of the sublimest effects, that even he who looks upon certain associations as an important expedient, may be satisfied merely to admire this inexhaustible fount of colour-values. It is like some overflowing store of beauty, where every glance suffices to make one proof against ugliness, and where fresh novelties appear every day.

Bonnard's talents as a book-illustrator are now generally recognised. Here he gives us sketches, still more individual than his pictures, and here we catch as it were a distant echo of the melody that underlies his whole being, explaining much and allowing us to hope for much: a gentle, tender reminiscence of Greece, that connects him with Denis. The connection reveals itself even in the poorly printed sketches for Verlaine's "Parallèlement," but far more obviously and happily in his last work, the beautiful drawings for "Daphnis and Chloë," the loveliest evocation of Greek grace.

Roussel's point of contact is here. He belongs to Bonnard, not to his brother-in-law Vuillard. He is the most delicate of the three, a poet who breathes his pastel-landscapes on to the canvas till they are like the wings of butterflies, and whose one danger is that he may spoil by industry what he has accomplished by intuition. One would fain lead him past wide walls, that he might lay his hand on them to cover them with exquisite things, and then never allow him to see them again. His magic touch marks him out for a decorator. Sometimes Fragonard seems to have revived in him, but his nymphs are still airier than the Graces of the eighteenth century. We appreciate him when we compare his art with the more dazzling manner of such a dexterous painter as Charles Guérin, who gets his decorative effect by a coarsening of Cézanne and the eighteenth century. The youthful Pierre Laprade might be more appropriately grouped with the triad; he has the same sterling artistic qualities, and the same ambition to translate a great exemplar—Manet in his case—into a more fluid form. It is to be hoped that his charming elegance may avoid the dangerous quicksand of chic and find tasks that will preserve him from mannerism.

Such has been the privilege of Bonnard and Roussel. It is their immunity from every kind of affectation that has set them so high. They dread monotony, and this is perhaps what has tended to keep them in the shade. Vuillard is more easily classified than the other two; the amateur remembers him, as soon as he has recognised his "note." This is not said in his disparagement; but perhaps the two others will go farther, for up to the present they seem only to have been playing, as in expectation of the moment that will bring them a great and decisive task. All three are the apprentices of a new craft, and, setting aside all else,

K. X. ROUSSEL: HYLAS
FÉNÉON COLLECTION, PARIS

K. X. ROUSSEL: NYMPHS AND FAUN
FÉNÉON COLLECTION, PARIS

remarkable personalities for this reason, that, in spite of the dazzling brilliance of the Impressionists, they found out a way in which, though they did not ignore the experiences of the others, they nevertheless developed their own individuality. Their works should not be hung side by side with those of Manet and Degas; not solely for their own sakes, but also a little for that of the greater men. It is easy to overlook them in the company of these heroes; but there are times when, fatigued with the stronger effects of the others, we give them the preference. They seem better attuned to us, to our dwellings, our moods, our pleasures.*

* We reproduce a fine Vuillard as well as Bonnard's family group. These reproductions give at least some suggestion of the originals. The reader will find it more difficult to get an idea of Bonnard, the most important and remarkable artist of the group, from the other works here given. No reproduction could preserve the gem-like effect of the figures, etc., on the gray ground of the street scene; how, for instance, the basket on the left is brought into relation with it by an exquisite blue, and the relation of this gray to the green of the animated background. The girl on the left must be imagined in very dark gray, with touches of pure black. These young painters learned how to use black from Odilon Redon. In Bonnard's nude study the colour of the flesh is a wonderful pale olive of indescribable lustre. Good pictures by Vallotton and Vuillard have lately been acquired by the Luxembourg.

FV

DEGAS: DANCERS (LES POINTES)
(PASTEL)

DEGAS AND HIS CIRCLE

EDGAR DEGAS

Hatred in a holy thing.—Zola.

One of the cheering elements in an historical survey of art is the study of its regular and invariable developments. It is deeper and more encouraging than the greatest epic poet could conceive it, simple and logical, but with that simplicity which remains a mystery—the simplicity of such a fact as that two human beings can produce a third.

The age needed an art; to what end it knew not, having already a large inheritance from other ages. It created one, found its exponents, and these produced just what was needed for a development, of which they had no notion. They worked as if in conclave, each in his little cell with a couple of assistants; and afterwards, when each had finished his work, it was exactly what was needed to complete the rest.

Manet set forth the general programme: the new art was to be decoration pure and simple; Cézanne exhibited the texture of the stuff; Renoir painted exquisite fragments for it, the feminine element that must be in all real painting; Degas drew for it.

All were fragmentary, Manet among the rest; he conjures up but a suggestion of the great billowy curtain, on which the *Déjeûner sur l'Herbe* was to be set; but this was just what we wanted to see. His Olympia has as much of Titian as we can have to-day without deliberate imitation of Titian. His yearnings are ours. Degas does not show the great enterprise in outline, but he gives European art an anatomy, a medium, that has to do with the skeleton of art. And this medium too is ours.

Degas is a modern and yet an ancient. In his inmost soul, I believe he despises modern painting. When young painters bring their pictures to him, he passes his hand over them, and only if he finds the surface quite smooth will he look at the bearer. He divines something of the evanescence of painting in relief, and would never practise it. Ingres knew the truth, a pupil of Ingres handed it on to him. The painter must paint in such a manner, that nothing should run in from outside, but that all should come from within, that all the glowing radiance should be overlaid with a firm skin. He tried it once upon a time; and not only long ago, when Lamothe was still alive. Six years ago he had a large oil picture in his studio, ballet-dancers in a park-scene, which he had begun some six years before; it is probably still unfinished. The old finish is no longer to be accomplished; it does not harmonise with our modern nerves, our desires, our passionate delight in colour, our pleasure in the throb and quiver of life. He himself could not resist; the colour-demon raged in him too, and his hand twitched each time he

saw a movement of that remarkable modern life which woman showed him. Very seldom did he venture to paint with all his power; he thought it too ephemeral for canvas, and took paper and gaily coloured pencils. With these he could let himself go.

We are conscious of a certain violent chagrin in Degas. Everything in him centres in this: the indifference that allows him to trust his miracles of colour to such fragile materials; his scorn of publicity which amounts to misanthropy; the barbarous cynicism with which he empales his women. I can almost imagine that he would take pleasure in hearing men abuse him; he would look upon their execrations as the howl of pain uttered by the beast beneath his heel.

Degas inspires fear; one has the feeling of being observed for once in the unflattering nakedness of instinct. At certain moments, every man is a mere bundle of quivering cells, inordinately ugly and ludicrous. Degas has made such moments monumental.

Liebermann, in his brilliant study on Degas, very justly insists on Degas' relation to Daumier. Degas is not so rich as the slayer of lawyers, but harder. He seems to be combating the classic tradition which transfigures Daumier's most biting caricatures; his chagrin vents itself even upon Ingres. Out of the faces of courtesans, out of defiled flesh that rages in silence, out of the smiles of meagre ballet-dancers, out of the pain that is almost pleasure again, he creates a new and grandiose world of form, which follows its codex as strenuously as the doctrine of Ingres. His form is a monstrous mask, like the devil's heads of the Japanese, but more human—more bestial. There is not a stroke that is not inevitable. It is hardly permissible to speak of correctness in this connection; it is all more exact than Nature; her most secret essence, movement, as it arises in matter, before the brain directs it, is reflected in frigid visions.*

Over all he sheds an intoxicating splendour of colour, pain bathes in marvellous lights; his stage-settings become Elysian fields, before which all tropical images pale. His planes are like great butterfly-wings; it seems as if every motion of the air must stir this ethereal colour-dust, so carelessly strewn. He has laws for the distribution of colour, that defy all analysis. It is not so much colour itself as the flickering, darting quality of the touches. Sometimes ten, twenty rare tones seem to have been produced by nothing but a bit of blue or violet, or that purple, which runs through the picture like a forest path, that yellow, not laid on the paper, but growing from it in organic fashion, like some strange microscopic fungus. In addition, there is an extraordinary certainty of vision, an instinctive grasp of great effects, a renunciation of all that might give a smoother reality to the complexity of forms as created by him, and the mysterious conjunction of a draughtsmanship subserving the keenest synthesis, with this foam-born splendour of colour.

Long ago it was discovered that his draughtsmanship showed the influence of the Japanese. There is certainly a good deal of Japan in it, but also uncommonly little. The calligraphy of the Japanese, the slender curve, is conspicuously

* Gauguin well understood the paroxysm which Degas seeks in the theatre: "On the stage," says Degas to himself, "everything is false, the light, the scenery, the hair of the dancers, their corsets, their smiles. Only the effects produced by these, the arabesques, are right. . . . Sometimes the masculinum, the male dancer, intervenes. He holds the danseuse, who gives herself to him. Yes, she gives herself, but only for the moment. All you who expect love from a dancer, never hope to have it when you hold her in your arms. The dancer only gives herself upon the stage."

DEGAS: HARLEQUIN AND COLUMBINE
PASTEL

absent. Rather is Degas Gothic, his devil's mass suggests high cathedral windows, the sunlight shining through their crimson glass. Many of the nude studies in which he lingers over the carnations, the backs of the women he has shown crouching in the bath, recall Japan, the fantastic interlacement of limbs where bodies become mere implements of flesh. But they might also remind us of Ingres, or of Michelangelo, or of any other genius who amused himself with the human body, more especially, indeed, of the painter of the *Bain Turc*, and the sinister sweetness of that arabesque of limbs.

Degas has the same flexibility, but he adds a certain angularity to it, to give sharpness and definition; he seizes the joints, not the flesh. Even in Ingres we note a shade of cruelty. In Degas it looms large and brutal. The puppets Ingres shows us nestling in silken cushions, Degas sets dancing on tense strings; he rubs the flesh off, and reveals the movement of the bones. A jockey on his horse becomes a combination of human and equine anatomies brought into action by riding, and he carelessly throws a beautiful coloured skin over the whole. He is a hundred times simpler than the Japanese. Where they play with lines, he works with planes, and above all, he is thoroughly European.

Degas has almost given a conventional form to the Europe of our day; a convention very unlike that of the stylistic nations and epochs. His lines, too, are eloquent of things beyond the subjects they represent. Among his women, man makes himself heard, the modern Monsieur, cosmopolitan humanity, in fact, born to-day with peculiar senses, peculiar nerves; and also the world as mirrored in these nerves and senses. Line, the vehicle of this form, has no longer time for the long-drawn melody the earlier masters gave it in their representative works. It has become more ordinary, more uncompromisingly real; it gives us Röntgen rays, as it were, and the art it expresses feels itself free from all dissimulation. But it shines gloriously, nevertheless, its splendour is perhaps more genuine; it harmonises with the discoveries of our age, which has learnt to resist the stupefying influences of illusion, and to draw new beauty from the laws of Nature. Degas works in the smallest space with the slightest means, and in the shortest limit of time, just as in every other domain we of to-day seek to snatch the greatest effects from the slightest means, and endeavour to make the short span of our existence as rich and happy as possible with the smallest amount of effort.

Degas's latest colour-phase is perhaps the finest of all. The earlier pastels, more modest in colour, seek their effects in larger ensembles, occasionally treated with the minuteness of miniatures. I remember one tiny opera scene, measuring perhaps fifteen centimetres, which gave the ballet, the musicians, the people in the boxes. There are numbers of such subjects on a larger scale. The beautiful pastel of the Caillebotte bequest in the Luxembourg with the *pas seul* is one of many; Durand-Ruel, Camondo, and Lerolle own dozens. But the little example I have mentioned was a marvel among them all; it showed the master's almost inconceivable power of dealing with space as he pleases.

Of course, the earlier works are more intimate in effect than the later ones. Among our reproductions, we give the two exquisite pastels formerly in the Tavernier collection, *Les Pointes* (between 1875–1880) and *Arlequin et Colombine* (about 1880). The old Dutch masters would have worked like this if they had used pastel. In the large example belonging to Durand-Ruel, the two ladies on the sofa in the ante-room, executed probably about the year 1889, Vermeer seems to

have come back to us. His superb olive tone is there, and also the marvellous use of colour in an interior which distinguishes the Dutchman. An indescribable effect of cosiness is produced by this corner-sofa, the greenish surface of the back, finished at the top by a checkered upholstering, in the squares of which reddish and bluish tones are used with incredible cunning. The attitudes of the two women are no less masterly; instinct with a subtle intimacy that has no touch of sharpness here, and only gives a delicate suggestion of individuality to the sitters. Again we are reminded of the great Dutchman, and of the women he painted in rooms.

Such pictures reveal Degas's radical superiority in culture to all his friends. This culture gave him the steadiness that preserved him from stumbling in bold decorative fragments such as his *Sortie de Bain** a voluptuous arabesque, that yet remains human and intimate. Later on, he got stronger effects; he drew the three marvellous pastels owned by Durand-Ruel, each of three dancers in different attitudes and different colours; one, pink, flame colour, and emerald; the second blue, violet and green; the third a still more indescribable symphony of orange and violet. They represent three stage-episodes, fairy scenes. And the dancers are transformed; they are not human beings, but decorations. Their skin is no human epidermis; the abnormal pores in which the pigment is secreted suggests the bark of rare trees, the hide of legendary salamanders, a strange earth-crust overlying brass. The development of painting in this disciple of Ingres defies analysis. This discreet manipulator of gray tones, who in his pictures of washerwomen, in his remarkable *Cotton Factory*, in his early sporting pictures, seemed only to stand aloof from Nature in order to approach her more impressively, this cool observer of life, this severest of realists, has created a world of fantastic beauty in which his realism only serves to make the incredible probable and the impossible a matter of course.

Behind this mystery we divine a man who is at no pains whatever to impress himself upon the world as a remarkable personality, and his Mephistophelean attitude towards humanity manifests itself finally as a suggestion ,which we, his easily hypnotised contemporaries, work out for ourselves. If it be true that he is governed by an abnormal conception of life,—the numerous anecdotes of his personal moroseness have no doubt tended to an exaggerated estimate of this—that he is a scornful misanthropist, with every reason for his attitude, we may find comfort in the positive works due to this apparent or actual pessimism. What strikes us as his chagrin, his cruelty, may be in fact the method of an artist, unusual in these days, of expressing something in the things he represents, other than what we so glibly refer to as Nature. Degas, when he paints his shop-girls, always means something more than hats, dresses and faces, and this significance for which the poor shop-girl and the well-known dancer are in themselves insufficient, offends our less aspiring minds. He invents movements, the mechanism of which appears more significant than anything these movements could express, if translated into actualities. For creatures whose chief pre-occupation seems to be the carrying of band-boxes or the taking of baths, receive a certain hieratic impress which seems to us incompatible with the mental attitude of these small fry, and with that they call forth in ourselves. In a pastel belonging to M. Alexis Rouart, the well-known collector of Chinese art, two milliners standing on severely parallel planes one behind the other stir emotions in us that we are accustomed to feel before the heroic conceptions of the old masters. This parallelism, or the

* In the Tavernier collection; see reproduction.

DEGAS: THE BATH

PASTEL

LUXEMBOURG, PARIS

DEGAS: A CAFÉ ON THE BOULEVARD MONTMARTRE

PASTEL

LUXEMBOURG, PARIS

object of this arrangement, is to be found in every Degas of the last thirty years. If we note it carefully, we shall recognise in this also a homage to the master's unique type, a new standpoint, and therewith a new history of his art. Even in the early picture of the Henri Rouart collection, the two dancers exercising at the bar (1878), the arabesque of arms and legs speaks a solemn language, amidst the enchanting harmonies of gray and white and yellow.

It would be superficial indeed to pronounce this language merely a means adopted by the painter to express his ill-temper. The latest pictures, such as Durand-Ruel's series of dancers mentioned above, have nothing left that could interest the expounder of painted philosophies, and everything that might permit us to hope for the return of an art that should pass from the stage into life.

THE SUCCESSORS

Degas created a line. Daumier had a share in it, as in all typical results of modern art, but Degas moulded it so strenuously that we must admit his creative rights in it. This line persists among us. It became a sign-manual for the whole generation of blagueurs, as appropriate to the art of to-day as was the sonorous phrase to the period of Romanticism. It was natural that it should also penetrate deeply into art-producing materia, and that it should become the great motor of modern creation, in spite of the manner in which its author held aloof. Citing the whole army of draughtsmen who work at newspaper illustration, from Forain to Capiello, and many artists outside of France, we should only indicate the more transitory side of Degas' influence. Forain has never become more than a very brilliant interpreter, who expanded what Degas expressed more trenchantly in a few symbols. His wit often produces its effect by means of a mechanical exaggeration, underlying which we detect the same weakness that betrays itself in most of his essays in painting. He is simpler than Degas, but the poorer by this simplicity, and it almost seems as if the value of these abstractions—especially in his later manner—had been over-estimated, with the idea that it is hardly possible to go too far in this stripping away of the superfluous adopted by the moderns. Instead of using Degas for the purpose of synthesis, the fragment is reduced or enlarged in fragmentary fashion. But the indian-ink drawings of a Hokusai remain superior to all European essays in this genre.

The poster was the natural medium for this vivacity, and Chéret and Steinlen have been the most happily inspired of those who have attempted to seize the brief moment which the hasty eye can spare for it.

The future of painting lay in a greater task. The problem was, not only to annex Degas' formula for the boulevardier, but to adapt it to tradition. It can hardly be said that this has been accomplished as yet. The time allowed it has been too short, and the strange and stubborn elements of the new line are as yet too novel to assimilate with the spirit of Poussin. It seems piquant enough to entice artists like Besnard to make advances to the *bourgeois*. But while men are still seeking, the fruit has passed away to other regions, and has brought forth new blossoms. Gauguin took it with him to the tropics. At Pont-Aven—I am anticipating the development we are presently to trace—a school arose, to which Gauguin gave the mighty linear impulse. Here synthesis is the main, nay, the sole preoccupation. Did the old man ever dream of such successors? Out of his fiery iciness a consuming fire has passed into youth. The great fragments have been pieced together by clumsy fingers, his vitriolic raillery has worked beneficently in scaring away trivialities. The darkness of knowledge is transformed into profound symbolism, and from the flesh of the hetairai of our great capitals men fashion—the images of saints and virgins!

Only one artist capable of grasping all that Degas possessed remained in the vicinity of the great prototype. This was Lautrec, a painter who, under more favourable conditions and with a longer term of life, might have greatly surpassed his exemplar.

TOULOUSE-LAUTREC: À LA MIE

BERNHEIM COLLECTION, PARIS

PHOTOGRAPH DRUET

HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC

HERE, again, chagrin became creative force, intensified by purely physiological elements. Lautrec came into the world in 1864, a scion of one of the most ancient families of the French noblesse, with all the hereditary impulses of patrician blood towards power and beauty. At the time when his forefathers, the Counts of Toulouse, made their glorious tradition, such sons as he looked to knightly prowess for distinction, and their descendants nowadays show the same ardour in achieving the kind of hero-hood whose sphere is the narrow circle of club-life. An accident, in which we might fitly recognise the hand of God, determined Lautrec's fate from the outset. When a child, he broke both his legs, and his constitution was not sound enough to accomplish the normal process of recovery. He became a cripple. Only the upper part of his body developed, more especially the head, the brain, which towered above those of his more robust contemporaries. It was not often it met its match in the Paris of the waning nineteenth century.

Lautrec accepted the loss of his legs and adjusted his life to his conditions. He took men and things very much on the surface, not so grimly as Degas, even with a certain bonhomie. He had to seek beauty in the society where money and pleasant speech gained him tolerance, and was not a little surprised to find many beautiful things even there. He would sometimes come to his Montmartre acquaintances and vow that to see such and such a Viennoise or Anglaise "c'est à se mettre à genoux," and he was perfectly sincere when he showed his presentments of them, and waxed eloquent in admiration of "la belle bête." If beauty lies in abundant forms, the Parisian "demi-monde" is rich in charms. Its women dress to be seen from a distance, like neo-Impressionist pictures; wishing to suggest the bodies beneath their clothes, they emphasise those details of toilette that harmonise with their anatomy. Of course they caricature the fashions created by the most distinguished of their class, but we do not look to them for refinement. There is a pictorial instinct in their arrangements of mass and colour, which is art here no less than on canvas; and the more they lay stress on what Nature has made them, the more perfect are they after their kind. We may grant that they get their reliefs with "shreds and patches," that a painted face seems unappetising to our modern taste, and that the cocotte is a jade. These are details. We need not approach them too closely. Here, again, æsthetics come to the help of morals; the nearer the spectator gets to these works of art the less attractive do they seem, and intimacy with them strikes one less as sinful than as unintelligent—as though one should attempt to judge a work of art by touching it.

Lautrec, at any rate, thought them beautiful, nor would it be just to call him depraved on this account. It was merely a natural admiration for natural things, and he had the art of making this peculiarity of his objects into pictures. He saw in love with them, as was Leibl with his wrinkled peasants. This antediluvian vigour of vice fascinated him, and in the "toupet" of these castaways he perhaps saw some of the barbaric grandeur of prehistoric epochs. He certainly never dreamed of scourging modern manners with his works. His quest was for pictures, and he felt no repugnance when he took up his abode for months in a certain hospitable house near the Boulevard, where he painted a notable series of portraits, which

Paris ought to possess. Fragonard has come to life again in these medallions. Nor was he obscene when he painted his figurantes behind the scenes, when their chic had ended in exhaustion, and the flesh relaxed into loose masses on pillows, like ill-tied parcels. He delighted in these shapeless shapes, and painted draperies that looked like women, and women that looked like draperies. He painted human organisms, with scarcely anything human about them, and the marvel of it is that they remain organic, such was the magic of his art. His methods were the same in dealing with men. Bruant's cloak, his broad-brimmed felt hat, his famous shawl, produced masterly planes, which linger in the mind like Volkslieder. His friend and cousin, Tapié de Celeyran, introduced him to Péan. Here he gloried in the broad white surface of the operator's apron, the widely opened jaws of the patient, the surgeon's energetic grip, and painted the grandiose and terrible picture now in his cousin's possession.*

But women interested him more than all the rest. He made them into poetry, when he was not using them for fresco-drama. Daumier scarcely observed woman at all, or treated her with scant courtesy. In Lautrec's lithographs she becomes the Don Quixote of a fantastic epic, in which the very subordinate male part is occasionally played by Sancho Pansa. Sometimes he draws her slim and slender, a ghostly lath-like figure. Yvette, Lender, and Jane Avril were his born types: he sketched the hallucinations of the consumptive demirep, which take life and substance from exhaustion; he sought the grotesque in all the ironies of cosmopolis: the mixture of the petty and gigantic peculiar to Paris, the colossal absurdity of a remnant of the ancient forms of culture in the midst of a new world sharply opposed to it, the folly of a traditional gesture to express the unutterable wants of the day. No artist had a keener perception of our modern love of slender forms. He noted our favourite dogs, the large, slim African sloghis, the Pierrot-like poodles, the weedy horses, with their stilt-like legs. Avril was to him something in the nature of a long-legged thoroughbred. He showed her in dances—as, for instance, in the most brilliant of all posters, *Avril au Jardin de Paris*—where her dainty leg has the grace of some delicate racer in motion. And La Goulue has affinities with the robust circus-horses on which he poises his airy acrobats.

In his excellent study in *Figaro Illustré* for 1902 (No. 145), Arsène Alexandre notes the influence of the sporting painter Princeteau, who was Lautrec's friend and neighbour at the beginning of his career. In 1883 he entered Bonnat's studio, where he vexed his soul with dark heavy colours; there is an old woman praying painted at this period, which gives no hint of Lautrec's later development. In 1884 he spent a barren year with Cormon. In 1885 he met Degas and found his true path.

Lautrec is unimaginable without Degas. In his earlier works there are faces and scenes in which we recognise the typical forms of the early Degas. We are struck in particular by the affinities to the exquisite, but unhappily very rare etchings of the older master. Not only did Degas show him the way to his own special domain; he taught him to create its special forms. But Lautrec dared to do what Degas scorned, he painted his pictures, and that finally led him away from Degas to a wider field. He belonged to a new generation; and perfect as his drawing was—certainly the most brilliant basis of his development—his special importance lies in his mastery of large surfaces; it is hardly too much to call him a monumental painter.

* Dr. Tapié de Celeyran also owns the most important collection of Lautrec's lithographs.

LAUTREC: THE MODEL RESTING (LE REPOS DU MODÈLE)
BERNHEIM COLLECTION, PARIS
PHOTOGRAPH DRUET

His vigourous Moulin Rouge pictures affect us like frescoes, frescoes compounded of rouge and tulle and taffetas. Take, for instance, the *Promenade*, in M. Bernheim's collection, Paris, where the three cocottes walking arm in arm, fill up the surface powerfully with three robust forms intersected on each side by the frame. In the two pictures with which Lautrec adorned the exterior of La Goulue's booth, his rare talent already revealed itself beneath the farce, especially in the one where the foreground is gay with spectators and La Goulue swings her leg on the stage. It recalls Seurat. Lautrec mocked at fresco, as at everything else, but in spite of this, he found some fine motives for it. Such are his grandiose poster, *Reine de Joie*, and his *La Goulue at the Moulin Rouge*, with the decorative black line of the spectators' heads, and in the foreground the huge figure of the partner—a reminiscence of Daumier's *Ratapoil*. Such again are many of his lithographs ; the most brilliant of all, for instance, the *Lender* which appeared in *Pan*, with its masterly distribution of line and colour, the completest victory over Japan and the most dazzling illustration of Manet's programme of flat painting ever achieved on a sheet of paper. His pictures teem with decorative details. The drawing *Au Cirque*, where the little yellow figure dances in the centre, while the three Japanese girls hold up their fans in the foreground, is an amazing linear invention. Here psychology is dumb ; it is pure arabesque.

Lautrec's brushwork was as hasty as his drawing. He liked cardboard for a background, and left as much as possible of the blank surface in his compositions. He would have nothing to do with technical recipes. Seurat interested him, but he would have laughed at the idea of a definite programme. In many of his pictures we find some original little commas, which reveal his pleasure in ornament, but this is not in any degree colour-division. At times he shows an exaggerated negligence, but at his worst he could not be a renegade to his aristocratic taste, and he chose his colours with the same careless confidence with which he scribbled his arabesques. It was only in his last decade that he began to concern himself with technique. Two visits to Spain had revealed Velazquez to him. Here he found the completion of Degas. The result was the series of family portraits, in which the crippled dwarf suddenly revealed himself an inimitable master, whose earnestness, brilliance, and technical accomplishments entitle him to rank among the greatest painters of the nineteenth century. Great things were to be expected of him in those days. There was such a maëstria in these pictures, such a classic repose in form and colour, that we bless the South of France which inspired them, and could curse his beloved Paris, which destroyed him.

It was in vain that they gave him a keeper, of whom he made a brilliant portrait, which he inscribed " Mon gardien quand j'étais fou." His birth was an extravagance, and it was only by means of extravagances that his artistic being was sustained. When it was forced into normal channels, his art was quenched and with it his life, in the summer of 1901.

The outcome of Lautrec's fifteen years of activity is very considerable. He must have painted about a hundred and thirty pictures. His lithographs are to be reckoned by hundreds. There are some hundred and fifty important prints, twenty-five posters, and several dozen theatrical programmes, menus, and such like. The trifles he threw off at odd moments are innumerable. It was his habit to draw on the stone at his printer's, Stern's, as other people write. He further distinguished himself as an illustrator of books.

RENOIR IDYL

KESSLER COLLECTION, WEIMAR

RENOIR AND HIS CIRCLE

APART, yet in close affinity with his friends of the Batignolles group, stands Renoir. There was room for a Frenchman among the Spaniards and Japanese. In one respect he was superior to them all.

It is a credit to France that the most purely French artist of this great generation, to which we owe a new development of painting, should once more manifest the peculiarities of the old masters. He is sharply differentiated from Manet, who was his first inspiration, and still more sharply from Degas, while he seems to have nothing at all in common with Monet and his circle.

He, too, was attracted by decoration, but on the lines laid down so securely in the eighteenth century, that it would have reached a marvellous culmination had not its violent dislocation by the Revolution dimmed our modern appreciation.

Fragonard bore the same relation to Boucher as did Manet to Courbet. The Du Barry's gifted decorator preluded that development of flat painting, of which Manet was the supreme master. A period rich in forms lay behind him, when he gave himself up to the fancies of his brush. This no painter of a later generation could replace. Renoir, on the other hand, determined to reanimate the tradition which Baudry had falsified, by richer methods.

This explains the superficial aspects, but not the essential qualities of Renoir; it covers his sympathy with Impressionism, but not his specific value. As a third element, he introduced a rarity, precious as an antique jewel—a perfected material.

Degas may penetrate more deeply into our souls, Cézanne may stir our emotions more powerfully, Manet may kindle a more glowing enthusiasm in us, but Renoir has one thing that they all lack. Perhaps he is the only contemporary painter whose works would have made Rubens turn to look at them. He is the only one who is not fragmentary after the manner of the others, and his pictures, finished or unfinished, have not that hollowness of the painting ground, over which we look away with the others, to stray after other things. He shows how much that means. Again, we have that marvellous delight in the surface which is painting throughout and not only on the outside; the perfection that tormented Whistler and drove him and so many others to paint in dark tones, that caused Degas to give up painting altogether, that Velazquez alone possessed; the goal of the supreme period of painting: the rendering of vitality with all the resources of the painter.

How he achieved it is a mystery. He showed himself a master very early in his career, when his enthusiasm was stirred by Manet, in the *Lise* of 1867, exhibited at the Salon the following year. It is now in the little museum of Hagen in Westphalia, and has made the spot a sanctuary of noble art, to which the Germans

should come in troops as pilgrims.* It seems almost incredible that a young man of twenty-six should have shown such wisdom; not that he should have been so gifted—for others, his contemporaries, were even more so—but that he should have been capable of such self-restraint in the presence of a dazzling Nature, painting, as he did, in the open air from beginning to end. Against a magnificent background of green, brown, and russet tones formed by the damp shade of a woodland, by the sturdy trunk of a forest tree, on which stray sunbeams flicker with a pearly lustre, stands the life-size figure of the White Lady. The dress is the wonderful muslin of our grandmothers, vaporous and transparent, showing the harder white of the under-dress. Cloud-like it clings about the full figure and exquisite arm, and veils the hand that lifts the skirt. Here a tiny ribbon holds the sleeve into the wrist. The other hand clasps the carved ivory handle of the little sunshade of black lace over white; another white appears in the narrow brimmed hat, and finally, we have the pearl of the flesh. We might almost venture a comparison with Velazquez' Papal portrait. His *Innocent* makes its effect in like manner by means of the draperies. However much we may be carried away by the demoniacal art of the face, we must admit that it could never have made its ineffable effect without the splendours of the red and white costume, which can scarcely be called external, so closely is it interwoven with the imposing personality of the sitter. Here the many-toned white plays about the coarser carnations of a masculine face, reflecting all masculine sensualities. The covering of the left arm seems compounded of foam, and yet it distinctly reveals the masculine skin beneath it. In Renoir's *Lise*, on the other hand, the painting subserves woman. The white hue is not foam but vapour. It floats in manifold gradations about the soft cool roundness of the feminine body. These innumerable white tones seem almost to take on the charm of contrasts, asserting themselves in spite of the powerful opposition by which the rich black of the sash and the red of certain details struggle for mastery. Indeed, we find that it is these very oppositions which make the play of the various whites possible. The carnations are warmed by the red. It begins with its strongest note in the coral of the earring, pales perceptibly in the ribbon against the other side of the face, and appears as the highest tone in the curious yellowish pink complexion, which makes the snowy whiteness of the dress appear still whiter and more tender, and itself receives warmth from this cooler white. This *Lise*, the *Boy with the Cat* in the Arnhold collection at Berlin, the *Amazone* of 1873 (here reproduced) in the H. Rouart collection, Paris, and the double portrait in the Cassirer collection, Berlin, were the first achievements of the youthful genius. He had only left his teacher Gleyre a year or two before. These were documents, with which another might have closed his career: in Renoir's case, they inaugurated a series of immortal portraits, which reached their culminating point in the happy year 1874, when he painted the *Ballet Dancer* and *La Loge*.

In the picture of the ballet-girl the vapourous quality of the White Lady became style. The youthful flesh takes an added firmness from the airy envelope of the dress. The bluish gauze of the skirt almost melts into the background. The outline is peculiarly indefinite, the brown hair and the little pink shoes are almost the only touches of positive colour, and yet the general impression is that

* The picture belonged originally to Duret, who reproduced a fine drawing of it by Renoir in "Les Peintres Impressionistes" (Librairie Parisienne, 1878). The essay without the drawing was afterwards incorporated in the famous "Critique d'Avant-Garde."

RENOIR: LADY ON HORSE-BACK (L'AMAZONE)

H. ROUART COLLECTION, PARIS

of great colouristic richness. If, impelled by a desire to lay hold of something whereby we may indicate the inexplicable effect, as we stand before the picture, we recall the old English masters, we must recognise clearly that what there is of Gainsborough in the work springs from sources so alien to the Englishman's art that we must not press the comparison. No modern could get the air of the *Mrs. Siddons*, or of the sumptuous portrait in the Wallace collection. Such things lie outside the domain of modern art. People who should emulate the style of Mrs. Siddons in these days would be merely ludicrous; and modern painters who have the distinction of a Gainsborough, manifest the quality otherwise than Reynolds' famous rival. Yet there is nothing more opulent than the work which most suggests comparisons drawn from the great epochs of painting: *La Loge*. Heilbut, in his study on the picture,* very acutely observes that it creates two modern types by the technical methods of the old masters. If this result has been really achieved—and who can deny it?—these methods have been rejuvenated, and no single quality of the ancient art informs the work, but all that could be of service here. We might trace Watteau and Gainsborough, Velazquez, and the Venetians in Renoir. Heilbut showed less perception when he said the picture ought to be hung beside a Gainsborough, to test it. Renoir would not lose by such a process, but Gainsborough would! The English qualities that we detect in Renoir are of course more abundant in Gainsborough—pour cause!—but what shall we find of Renoir in Gainsborough! Durand-Ruel's little girl, painted by Renoir two years later, is still more English. It is noteworthy that he had never been in England at the time. When Manet and Pissarro took refuge in London in 1870, Renoir turned soldier. He first saw the Thames several years later, and, like a true Frenchman, he took no pleasure in the land of the hidden sun.

If we wish to define the difference between Renoir and the English, we cannot do so better than by comparing this French portrait of a child with the little girl painted by Whistler—with whom Renoir had more in common at one time than with any other Englishman. The presentments of Miss Alexander and of Mlle. Durand-Ruel are as dissimilar as an English and a French child. It is difficult to consider them apart from the differences of costume: Whistler dressed the English girl with consummate elegance; none of the flesh is visible but the hands and face, and one cannot imagine this little lady without her clothes. The little Durand-Ruel is a "gosse" pure and simple, as evidently made to be kissed as is the other to be looked at, fresh and alluring with her bare neck and little naked arms, wholly a child. And the painting of the Frenchman differs from that of Whistler in the same way: it is immeasurably younger, healthier, more vital. A comparison would be less legitimate, if Renoir had already acquired his later purity of palette when he painted this work, and had thus possessed a more obvious superiority. But of this there is little more than a hint. The beauty lies in the stupendous painting. The shimmering blue-green of the little frock, a shade more pronounced in the sash, cannot be described as a colour-value; it is a painted tissue, in which the sunlight plays a part. The little creature stands, an extraordinarily piquant apparition, against the faint green wall-paper flecked with red and green. Piquant, but absolutely natural, and standing just as an actual child would stand. Yet the whole composition is no less distinguished than the work of the American: the child is less aristocratic, but not the technique; this is royal, while

* "Die Impressionisten," Cassirer, Berlin.

that of the other is no more than lordly. To me the portrait of the little Durand-Ruel is a finer work; there is more nature in it, more, that is, of the nature of painting, more pictorial wealth. And, in spite of all the subtlety of the Whistler, the purely colouristic qualities of the Frenchman are more sympathetic. This was the miracle of Monet's chromatic achievement, that he placed the nature of painting on a new basis, a basis of purely physiological and perfectly indisputable effect. Monet is perhaps a barbarian of painting, but he was a phenomenon in his recognition of the fact, that the most enduring among the fascinations by which the eye is governed, must certainly be something that has its root in natural laws, that a picture made up of pure colours must make a more permanent æsthetic impression than a picture equally powerful not so constituted. This is as self-evident as that we never weary of a green meadow full of flowers. Even works so remarkable as Whistler's portrait of his mother, undoubtedly the most brilliant and inspired picture of the Courbet School, are not exceptions. The writer is far from accepting the extreme consequences of the theories of modern colour-virtuosi, which will be dealt with in a later chapter; but, with all due reserve be it said: a whole world divides us from this Whistler. It is superb in a museum, especially in the Luxembourg, where we seldom see it, where mind and eye are impressed by the greatness of the conception afresh each time we stand before it, without ever arriving at any intimate appreciation of it. In this particular setting, Whistler is perhaps more effective than any of the moderns. But, in spite of the veneration it inspires—nay, perhaps, because of it—we should not wish to have such pictures as this in our houses. Whistler, indeed, sometimes painted pictures it is impossible to see too often, or to have too near. But the *Mother* is not one of these.

We are impelled to demand nowadays that which Art can use in Nature. Monet brought what it must fain use. Nor could Renoir refuse to admit this truth. The struggle for colour was never fiercer in any artist, for none had ever more to lose. None achieved more precious results in the process.

Like Manet, Renoir started from black as his strongest colour, from the "Bijou rose et noir" on which Baudelaire wrote his famous quatrain. This black, which became so dangerous to Courbet, Renoir set himself to transform into blue, *i.e.*, he replaced a conventional harmony by a chromatic one. Delacroix helped him in the process. In the cushions below, on the left, in the *Women of Algiers*, we may find Renoir's palette after the Courbet period, as he used it in *La Loge* and many other works. Beautiful as it was, he had to abandon his kinship with the old masters, that he might become entirely master of himself. The problem tormented him for many years. In the large *Moulin de la Galette* of 1876 in the Luxembourg the victory still seems to hang in the balance. There is a tumultuous quivering vitality in this al fresco dance, in which the sun seems to be taking part, but we are conscious of a certain uneasiness, if we mentally compare it with the Hagen picture. It is undoubtedly a beautiful sketch, but how far short it falls of the perfection of the *Lise* or the *Boy with the Cat*, of Manet's broad handling, or of the vigorous roughness of Monet, who seemed to have been born for this kind of art! Yet in the very same year he reached a certain issue. Near the *Moulin de la Galette* in the Luxembourg hangs *La Balançoire*, the young girl leaning against a swing as she chatters to some young men. Here he has found the chromatic basis. In the *Moulin de la Galette*, an ugly, colourless black in the men's clothes still contends with the pure blue and yellow tones. *The Swing* is a lovely symphony in blue, of the most enchanting purity; the checkering of the rosy

FRAGONARD: WOMEN BATHING (LES BAIGNEUSES)
LOUVRE, PARIS

RENOIR: WOMEN BATHING (LES BAIGNEUSES)
BERNHEIM COLLECTION, PARIS

path with patches of sunlight is an exquisite fancy; the lively figures glow with a refreshing reality. In the next few years he ventured on greater tasks; he painted the brilliant picture of the girl asleep in a chair, with a sleeping cat on her lap. All the naturalistic suggestiveness of which he was master was set free; he painted the divinely animal, as Degas had painted the diabolically animal; the joy of life, as the other had painted the scorn of life. A healthy carnality radiates from innumerable feminine lips and eyes and breasts. Rubens comes to life again, purged of his lewdness. Renoir's women are neither more nor less chaste than his landscapes, his grasses and pools; theirs is an Elysian carnality, not yet convulsed by passion, still idyllic, still instinct with freedom and beauty. The love of these beautiful creatures is not devastating, but health-giving, as the children Renoir painted testify. Who has depicted babies like his? They overflow with health, and glow as if tinted with milk and blood. The famous *Fair Children* Exhibition of 1895 in London lacked its brightest jewels, for Renoir was absent.

This poetry of naturalism, this serene rendering of dazzling flesh is unparalleled in these days of over-heated brains. Looking at these pictures, it is difficult to believe in the much talked of decadence of the Latin races.

He demonstrates with jubilant tints: a pink, delicate as the bloom on a ripe peach, deepening into the red of a cleft tomato; a blue brilliant as that of the southern skies under which Renoir painted his best landscapes, an orange like gleaming quartz. Like Degas, he achieves the most intoxicating beauty with pastel. The Bernheims' picture of a nurse with two children (painted in the nineties) renders the bloom of healthy skin in all its gradations; the little granules of the material appear as the microscopic down on a childish epidermis.

The small oil picture of children in a wood—another work of this, his most resplendent colour-period—can hardly be appreciated in a reproduction, even in one so excellent as that made for this volume. In the mixture of orange and blue in the dress of the nurse and the coat of the dog, the sun seems to have charmed all the yellow to the surface, that we may divine the floods of purple below. It draws a pink from the boy's blue dress that should rejoice the hearts of the Neo-Impressionists, and the strong blue-rimmed yellow of the famous straw hat is another detail that agrees with their programme. But who would wish to see this indescribable material divided after their fashion!—the golden purple of the baby, where the silken texture of the little frock becomes a thousand times more silken in the golden hair; the rosy white of the little girl's dress beside it, and the magic confluence of all the colours of the foreground in the woodland mystery of fairyland.

This painter does not create colour-harmonies, he makes materials, like Watteau and Lancret, but his are more beautiful than theirs, more beautiful than those of Rubens or even those of the gods of Venice. These artists are superior to him in a thousand ways, they do much more with a poorer material; but no painter before Renoir ever so bewitched his material, that a little canvas like this one seems to contain the sum of all costly things, and yet remains so true to realities, that the effect is not that of a gem, but of the natural envelope of the objects represented. The picture is by no means unique in Renoir's vast work, and yet there are details in it that seem to spring from the happiest inspiration, that were not necessary, but which, when we see them, affect us as the gifts of some inexhaustible and lavish Crœsus. The young girl, for instance, holds a piece of needlework in her rosy fingers, just a wisp of stuff, made up of yellow and blue tones with a

touch of green. Looking at this, we take it to be the central point of the picture; the next day we find this in a tree-trunk, the next again in one of the faces. . . .

Here all theories and formulæ are at fault; we have to do with a richness as full of wonders as Nature herself. Renoir's colour is, in fact, a natural instinct, already revealed in the son of the poor Limoges tailor, who was earning a living by painting on china at the age of seventeen. There are china vases decorated by him in the fifties, which are perfect Renoirs. The beautiful colours seemed to bloom of themselves on the white porcelain. The black period, when he and his friends were under the influence of Courbet, was the beginning of the artist, not of the painter. He would, no doubt, have remained a china-painter to the end, had not the unhappy invention of printing on porcelain destroyed the flourishing art. But here again the ruin of the many proved the fortune of the individual. The youth's position was desperate; his hopes of getting work at Sèvres seemed unlikely to be realised. One day he was walking in the Rue du Bac when he saw a shop, in which transparent blinds for churches were manufactured. The business seemed to be flourishing, and the proprietor wanted more hands. Renoir went in and offered himself. The master made no difficulties; there was the workshop, he could come next day, the pay was 30 francs a blind. At the end of the first week he was the best workman on the premises, at the end of the second he was earning 100 francs a day, because he could work ten times as quickly as the rest. He thus made enough money to pay for a course at the École des Beaux Arts, where he met Monet, Bazille, and Sisley. In the summer they all went to Fontainebleau together. Here Renoir made the acquaintance of the aged Diaz, who took a fancy to him, gave him some lessons, and allowed him to make use of his credit with the colourman. The young people painted their dark landscapes no worse than the men of 1830, until one fine day Manet opened their eyes. The reign of Courbet was not yet at an end, however, and in Monet, Cézanne, and Renoir more especially, the influence of Courbet and of Manet strove at first for the mastery. Cézanne's snow-scene, in the Vollard collection, painted, no doubt, in the sixties, is unmistakably inspired by such Courbets as Duret's snow-scene, though it is already mellower than Courbet's; Manet's influence showed itself at once in an increased fluidity of the palette.

When Renoir had absorbed this new theory of colour, his next pre-occupation was to conquer the solidity of structure he had hitherto neglected, and to abandon the improvisation of the Impressionists.

About the year 1881 he painted the famous *Déjeûner des Canotiers*, the young folks seated at a meal under an awning. In parts it is quite in Renoir's old vein, an art that deals with joyous, fugitive charms, as in the dainty "tip-tilted nose" of the grisette, who is coaxing the dog beside her to sit up, the merry animation of the groups in the background, and above all, in the exquisite still-life on the table. But the two bare-armed oarsmen reveal new elements; they are almost like statues in the midst of the painting.

The next period in Renoir's art is generally looked upon as barren, especially in the circles of the Rue Lafitte, the non plus ultra of Impressionism. In reality it was perhaps the most fruitful in its relation to the influence exercised by Renoir in the development of art.

Even as a student at the École des Beaux Arts, Renoir had been an admirer of Ingres, and in those frequent studies of the nude he made at nearly every period of his activity, he never quite lost sight of the master. The time came when he

RENOIR: WOMEN BATHING (LES BAIGNEUSES) 1885

BLANCHE COLLECTION, PARIS

approached him more closely than any other painter of his generation, Degas himself not excepted.

Degas and Renoir are antithetical in many ways, and among others in their respective attitudes to Ingres. For Degas, Ingres was a starting-point, of which he never quite lost sight; his reverence for Ingres had a decisive influence on his drawing, but is manifest only in the early Degas the painter. For Renoir, whose artistic genesis was in sharp contrast to that of Degas, Ingres became a consummation. It is this that gives Renoir his distinction. From this moment he possessed to the full all that had lain dormant in him. Financially, his position was still wretched. No painter has had to wait more patiently for the favour of the purchasing public. The early pictures I have described, sold for a few hundred francs. The Hagen example for just 100. Nevertheless, he began to have admirers in the eighties. At this moment he risked all that charmed the amateur—his incomparable facture—and threw himself uncompromisingly into draughtsmanship.

The decisive picture was Mons. E. J. Blanche's bathing-scene, painted about 1885. Two naked women lie on their linen wraps on the bank; a third stands in the water, threatening to splash one of them; a fourth stands with her back to the spectator and binds up her hair; and the head and shoulders of yet another emerge from the water in the background. A woodland landscape encloses the figures. The pose of the two women on the bank is purely Ingresque, and indescribably beautiful. The foremost of the pair is seen in sharp profile; supporting herself with her left hand on the drapery, she raises her right hand and foot at an exquisite angle to repel her playfellow in the water, whose back is turned nearly full to the spectator. The voluptuous figure of the second woman on the bank is even more happily posed; confronting the spectator, her eyes fixed on her companion, she lifts the drapery over her shoulders with the most enchanting gesture. Ingres would have made it more perfect. Renoir clung to a certain abruptness, and this gives his figure a touch of delightful awkwardness that accords with the subject, and adds to the charm of the expression. Nevertheless, the purely formal inter-play of the limbs on the bank is admirable. The four hands and four feet so close together would have been a danger for a weaker artist. A stylist would have confined the picture to these two figures, and have been content to paint the splendid movement of the rhythmic arms. One is tempted to regret that Renoir did not. The consternation in the Rue Lafitte would have been great, the picture still greater. The movement is weaker in the remaining figures, and the relations are less convincing. The realist added the third figure; he wanted to explain the action on the bank. It is only in the distant woman, whose arms encircle her head, that the master of form proclaims himself again.

The picture is, therefore, by no means perfect. If we imagine it hanging between Fragonard's little gem, the *Bathers* of the Louvre, and Ingres' *Odalisque*, it loses on both sides. The figures have not the masterly convention of Fragonard's, who distributes his limbs almost like ripples on the water, and suppresses Nature when it would mar the decorative effect, and they are just as remote from the perfect equilibrium of the painter of the *Odalisque*, who made one single immortal line of the whole body. Yet Renoir, too, strove after Ingres' modelling; even in his early studies of the nude, long before he went to Italy, he reduced the form in order to make the masses more compact. But in this there was nothing of the Michelangelesque modelling that distinguishes French Baroque. Renoir is too

solid for this. His single figures, which he prefers to show in half-profile, stand out in powerful outline against the sky. One of the most beautiful of these, owned by Durand-Ruel and dated 1885, has the effect of a cloisonné enamel.* Turning her back to the spectator, the model thrusts both hands into her chestnut hair, on which lie heavy blue reflections. This is a Venus Anadyomene of a new kind. She sits on an overhanging ledge of cliff, her feet rolled in a bathing-sheet; from thence the mighty line rises along the exquisite curve of the torso, and the beautiful breast, runs sharply into the hollow under the arm and then sweeps out to the marvellous angle of the elbow. The sharp contour is won only by the perfect differentiation of flesh and of atmosphere, and not by contrasts of colour. This technique is markedly distinguished from that of the earlier and later periods. The figure is a smooth, firm plane, strongly relieved against the surroundings, the background and so on, where Renoir's high-toned palette is used in an airy fashion. Before this work we may be bold, and talk of monumental effects.

A visit to Italy effaced the harshnesses of the period. Renoir went to Venice, where he painted some marvellous landscapes. Here he procured letters of introduction to Richard Wagner, the god of his, as of Fantin's idolatry, and though he lost them he was able to paint a head of the composer at Palermo in a brief sitting. It was a very remarkable, but necessarily hasty performance, which Wagner laughingly pronounced very like a Protestant clergyman ! †

Returning to Paris with the sunshine of the south in his palette, Renoir resumed the study of the nude, and now attained the culminating-point of his admirable flesh-painting. The torsoes of his naked figures are always superbly modelled. In the extremities, his desire for roundness and his inability to forego pictorial effects, sometimes led to malformations, for which there are not always obvious compensations. In his colour-technique, he continues to experiment to this day, and if some of the excellences of an earlier period are lacking to his last manner, it is only of late years that he has mastered the preparation of his painting ground, that solid splendour which is so painfully deficient in Monet's work. When he began to lay greater stress upon drawing, he reduced the oily element in his colour. At the period of the Blanche picture, his canvases were left so dry that the permanence of the work is endangered. This dryness, very apparent in the Luxembourg picture, the young girls at the piano, exaggerates certain malformations of the body produced by the passion for roundness, which are characteristic of many Renoirs. But Renoir has this lofty affinity with Rubens: he can never sink so low, but that his very weaknesses are capable of producing abnormal elements of beauty. His scrofulous women have always some regal qualities. As Mauclair, in his study on Renoir ‡ very truly says, we must always distinguish between "the defects of poverty and those of exuberance." Rubens supplements defective harmonies by the turbulent force of his temperament. His successor must content himself with a smaller field. He is great when he concentrates his powers. Rubens, even when he loses himself in immensity, remains a victorious, though a frenzied god.

* See reproduction.

† It was the day after the completion of the score of *Parsifal*. Wagner consented to sit, on condition that the sitting should not last more than twenty minutes, and Renoir did not exceed the limit. The little picture now belongs to M. de Bonnières. Renoir made a replica, in '93, better, but still very sketchy, for Cheramy.

‡ *L'Art décoratif*, Nos. 41 and 42 (February and March 1902).

RENOIR: WOMAN BATHING (BAIGNEUSE)

DURAND-RUEL COLLECTION, PARIS

No member of the whole circle has experimented so freely with colour as Renoir. There are, in particular, many pictures of the eighties, painted on a dull blue ground, that seem unsatisfactory at a first glance. I may instance the group of young girls at a piano, on which is a bouquet, at present in the possession of Durand-Ruel. The deliberate uniformity of colour, especially in the dull blue of the ground, repels the naturalist. But if we give it time, the blue begins to work with a mysterious power. It concentrates the scattered yellow tones, shows up the beauty of the white and the vapourous pink and finally brings the spectator to think the whole picture as natural and as perfect as the daintily chosen bouquet. In this unity of tints that displeased him at first, he recognises a special medium of style, whose function it is to show richness in new ways and to complete that which the art that seeks style in outline had attempted.

In spite of its perfection, much of Renoir's vast and prolific work is fragmentary, perhaps because it was only thus that it could retain all its value. Without wasting much time in research Renoir has also made exorbitant demands on his divine gift in the multiplicity of his works. When others have stayed their hands, paralysed by the very intensity of their desire to create, he has gone on producing and producing, even when the outlook has been most gloomy. Like a marvellous river, in which magic forms are reflected, his activity rolls on; and still he accounts all days as lost when he has been unable at least to hold a pencil in his crippled fingers.

* * * * * * *

The circle that formed round these great heroes of painting still eludes definitive analysis. The influence of Degas is obvious throughout; that of Renoir is much more occult. If we should attempt to name all those who are indebted to him, the catalogue would be unending. It would contain elements so diverse as Seurat and Carrière, Gauguin, Bonnard, and Maurice Denis. His life work has been too vast and many-sided to make it possible for us to speak, as yet, of the school of Renoir. The direct affinities which Fauchet and others have attempted to demonstrate are mainly noticeable as a purely technical tendency, making for the production of solid canvases.

But indirectly, Renoir will be an influence reaching far beyond his age. Of all the Impressionists he is the most essentially an artist in the traditional sense, the one who, amidst all the immense progress of his time never forgot the old doctrine, that to paint is above all things the function of the painter; and wherever and whenever there is painting in France, Renoir's art will remain an example. Renoir's, and that of his three great friends. It may be that the example will have results somewhat different to those we, its contemporaries, look for. The time may come when, though the mighty personal achievement of these protagonists shall have lost nothing of its prestige, they will be appraised as, after all, but an important consequence of the upheaval accomplished by that great Roman barbarian, David, the last fruits of the Revolution which destroyed all the great national traditions of craftsmanship, and among them the divine prescription that governed Watteau's art. Brilliant as their names appear in the new period of history they inaugurated, they are not exempt from the tragedy inherent in their daring deed. They ate at a new board, sometimes laden with dainties undreamt of by their predecessors, but sometimes lacking necessaries, the bread and salt of the old masters.

The old masters possessed not merely a complex tradition, governing compo-

sition. Their greatest treasure was knowledge of the materials of their craft, of the processes to which panels, canvases and colours should be subjected, before they began to think of artistic creation per se, a sum of experience, to which every great master of technique among them added his quota, without setting aside what had been already won.

Our great moderns never passed through this elementary school, and just as technique was an easy matter to the ancients who had mastered their craft, so it presented colossal difficulties to men who often owed their experience to chance, to a sudden inspiration, to blind groping, and who sometimes had to risk the greatest dangers and make immense exertions, to work out and perfect their conceptions in accordance with their lofty ideals.

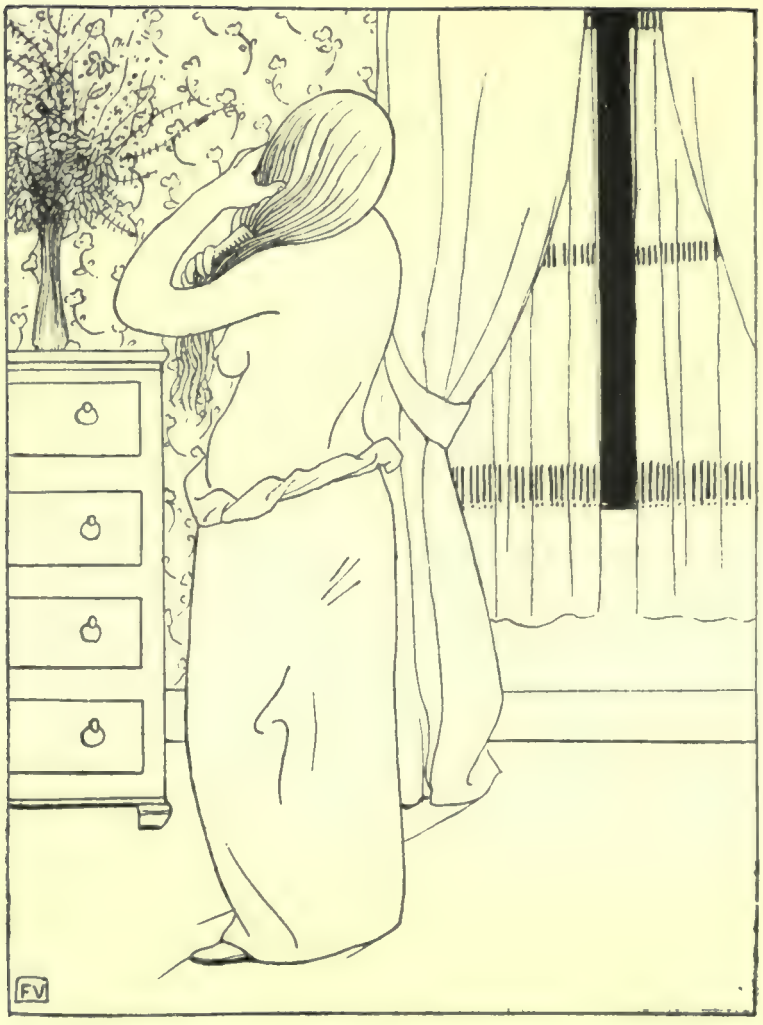
They had learnt nothing; some of them came from the lowest social stratum. They were all revolutionaries, and that which was offered them as long as they had patience to listen to others, was so essentially trivial and ephemeral, that their spirit of revolt drove them to deny the value of teaching altogether, and begin with Nature. Hence the unrest in their careers, and sometimes in their pictures, hence the makeshift and fragmentary element in their art. But these very elements make them belong to us and perhaps to us alone. Distant epochs may reject them perhaps, but if so, they will have to wipe us, their generation, out of history also, and with us a great epoch. For this art expresses nothing more vehemently than the stiff-necked, revolutionary force of our times. This creation by the light of instinct, could not have flourished in any but a strenuous age.

Does it point upwards—will these mighty fragments weld themselves into a great homogeneous force, gaining fresh strength from itself, without going back to the ancient springs? That is the question. We will examine a series of attempts at organisation, based on the achievements of these pioneers. The logical consequence seems so assured, that we can hardly doubt a happy issue. But, nevertheless, it behoves us not to lose sight of the relative nature of this result.

Monet, who influenced the whole circle, after he himself had sat at Manet's feet, is the most seductive of the group. He was the first to draw conclusions; he did so with the barbaric ruthlessness that belongs to crucial decisions. If among the great quartet there still lingered some personal reflex of the old art, however they adapted and modified it for their own ends, Monet was untouched by it. He is purely the child of his age, the bold proletarian, trusting only to himself, his reason, and—his luck! If we failed to recognise the relative quality of his art, we might shut out the Louvre from our future artistic appreciations. For from Monet onward the road leads away uncompromisingly from the old masters. We may ask where it will end.

RENOIR: NUDE FIGURE ON THE BEACH

DURAND-RUEL COLLECTION, PARIS



FROM A DRAWING BY FÉLIX VALLOTTON

FROM A DRAWING BY FÉLIX VALLOTTON FOR
"DIE INSEL"

CLAUDE MONET: THE BRIDGE AT ARGENTEUIL

FAURE COLLECTION PARIS

CLAUDE MONET: SAARDAM

TAVERNIER COLLECTION, PARIS

PHOTOGRAPH DRUET

BOOK III

COLOUR AND COMPOSITION

CLAUDE MONET: THE SEINE AT RUEIL

PHOTOGRAPH DURAND RUEL

I. COLOUR

CLAUDE MONET

> The chief person in a picture is the light
> in which everything is bathed.—TAINE.

MONET, like Manet, painted an *al fresco* meal, and at the time when Manet's star was in the ascendant among the friends. It is blonder, softer, daintier than that of the older man, like dawn before a fine summer day. Under the influence of his friend, Monet painted amazingly impressive things ; his large portrait of a lady in a splendid green gown—in a German collection, like the first-named picture—must be reckoned among the representative portraits of all time.

Monet is just as essentially talent, as Manet was genius. With him, talent manifested itself in a brilliantly trained eye, and the courage to obey it. Manet had more brain ; Monet seems only to incite the eye to thought ; and we can see how, as he grew older, an almost scientific will moulded form in his work. But he who delighted in the Monet of the seventies, and was not himself an old man at this time, will feel no disappointment as he makes the transition the artist judged necessary. In the landscapes of this time we find a style that absolutely determines the composition, and affects the senses like poetry. It is not Manet's great style, but a beneficent lyricism, avoiding the grander chords, that it may be all the lovelier in simple ones.

The most beautiful landscape of our world, that of the environs of Paris, has found the most beautiful artistic expression in Monet. The infinitely feminine element, so caressing to the senses, that characterises this district, the tact, if one may speak of tact in Nature, the sparkling quality which the Parisienne possesses, and which, whatever may be said against her, always remains child-like and lovable in her—all this is in the Monets painted when the artist was in his thirties.

Parisians cannot be grateful enough for having this landscape so near them. What may be said of Monet is applicable to the whole of Parisian art, indeed, to the whole time-honoured culture of the city. For him who has lived in Paris as a worker, the recollection of a fine Sunday out at Vetheuil, where Monet painted, or anywhere else on the Seine—there is nothing ugly round Paris—is a remembrance of something inexpressibly delightful. The sensation is akin to the psychic value of pleasure in a work of art, the nature of which is best realised, if we picture it as happiness remembered. It is, indeed, not only Nature one enjoys, or the marked contrast between city and country, but the sense of a special dispensation that has spread just such country round just this town—something so absolutely different from and yet so perfectly appropriate to it. Great cities are monstrosities, ugly accidents of the Earth's pure body, appearing here and there

like warts on the skin. This one city is beautiful, and does not seem to have been built up upon the earth, so much as to have grown out of it. Only here could she have arisen. Were she not here, the woods that surround her, the hills from which we descend to her, the water in which she is mirrored, would not be here either. Everything around has, or seems to have, its relation to Paris—a relation enhanced by the beautiful architectural works we find everywhere embedded in the landscape. The aspect of this Nature seems to reflect the happy temperament of the men who have made Paris, men who know what art is, because they possess Nature.

From the landscape of about 1830 to Monet is a far cry. The gentle lovers who had sat to Watteau and Fragonard were turned to stone at Millet's heavy tread. The harsh art of his northern temperament discovered a monumental gravity therein. The poetry of Corot and Diaz called forth song again, without saying anything very expressive of this particular landscape. Once when the great Rousseau came upon a woodman in the forest, he uttered the beautiful saying recorded by Burty: "Do you know the difference between an oak and a lath? Out of an oak we can make a million laths, but millions of laths will not make an oak." But he forgot the trees in the tree. Dupré and Daubigny sought ambush in the heart of the forest, and already they have become to us children of the woods. If we did not know where they worked, we should never believe that their models, too, stood at the gates of Paris. They all went into the woods and painted, and as we look at their pictures, saintly legends like that of Geneviève rise to our minds. Monet stayed upon the hill-top and gazed down. His eyes wandered over the garden terraces to the water, followed the coquettish windings of the river with its swift boats and quiet islands, strayed into the valleys, climbed the wooded hill opposite, and skirted the great line on the horizon that glitters in the sunshine. Monet's landscapes have faces, like Tintoretto's pictures; he has studied the physiognomy of Nature.

Thoma made a German landscape by the methods necessary to give it the characteristics it seems to German eyes to have; Monet and Pissarro painted a French landscape. The distinction is significant, no less for the country than for the people. Indeed, the whole racial difference is implied here. The sun shines upon the valleys of the Odenwald; a French temperament would rejoice in the light and colour here, as at home; but the Germans have read their own melancholy into the scene. The only new element in Thoma's art, however, is this unaffected sadness; his methods are terribly old-fashioned, though without the beauty of the old works, and he would have passed unnoticed altogether had he not appealed to the sentiment that is one of the "properties" of our cherished Germanism. As a painter, Thoma may be called a colourer rather than a colourist: that is to say, he brushes over his surfaces, and in the choice of colours is guided by certain elementary maxims, which sometimes give curious results. Artistic creation is at an end, in his case, as soon as he has finished his drawing; and all that this shows of completeness is a primitive renunciation, an application of coarse methods to the makeshift of an ancient convention. We cannot compare a Frenchman and a German it is said, and rightly so; but that it is impossible in this case is not to the credit of the German. We may imagine the two temperaments, each an optical apparatus producing distinct results; the one, Thoma's, lets everything related to light and colour pass through it, and retains nothing but a few lines; the other, that of Monet, shows these phenomena as

CLAUDE MONET: CLIFFS AND BEACH AT POURVILLE

PHOTOGRAPH DURAND-RUEL

they appear to an eye sensitive to light and colour. Both are methods of reduction, as are all artistic processes that deal with Nature; the difference between them is, that the one was practised with equal success some centuries ago, while the other was discovered to-day, and has increased our knowledge tenfold. In Germany one is led to the cruel conclusion that intellectual suggestiveness increases in inverse proportion to artistic power of perception. Reaction will be more readily effected in primitive beings before the primitive Thoma than before Monet, and beings still more primitive will be more deeply stirred by an anonymous oleograph than by either. These limitations are sometimes justified by the good the populace gets out of these things! Degas was perhaps wrong in maintaining that it is no function of art to become popular. But no amount of popularity will make mediocre art better.

Monet, however, has won popularity far beyond the boundaries of his native land, and this will wax greater and greater, for his works have that peculiarly cosmopolitan quality which makes for universal recognition. He painted not only French landscapes, but landscape in general, as it appears to modern senses. He has made these senses keener and purer, and has added to our natural capital of beautiful things.

Of course, we must be able to bear Monet. It requires strong nerves, nerves such as the people were wont to have; failing these, we may possibly find him brutal, lacking in that perfect harmony the French call "intimité," and so on. At every exhibition of French art in London, we read that the Impressionists lack this Whistlerian quality. This is hardly surprising if we take the conceptions of European art that prevail in England into account. But earnest Germans have also striven in vain to kindle before Monet's art, and have recorded kindred judgments. The fault does not lie with Monet. In taking "intimité" as a standard of excellence, there can be no question of purely personal tsate, by virtue of which one person likes a particular picture, another some other of equal merit, and of course it is possible to find a given picture by Sisley more "intime" than one by Monet; in certain cases, subjective elements contribute to this result, such as the space for which the picture was meant. But if, on the whole, we find, say Carrière and the Scotchmen "intime," and Monet, on the whole, the reverse, this is no mere question of taste, but a misfortune, an almost immoral perversity.

For this would mean that "intime" stands for subdued, dark or sentimental. As a fact, it can only mean the nicely balanced harmony of tones, which is possible with the most diverse colours, but which can only adequately reveal its charms as long as it remains recognisable. Constable painted and wrote superbly on this text. The English æsthete loves shadow. One cannot live with impunity in a town like London, where the sun only shines on great occasions. But then no one really lives in London. As soon as the normal Englishman leaves off work he rushes into the open air. It would be natural to do the same in English art, and Constable was wise in his generation. But if a man stays in the city and is bent on painting—and God knows no city has more of picturesque material—he should take the impression of misty London not as a means but as an end, not copying the dust with colourless dirt, but using luminous colour to render the London atmosphere, in which the essential element is not the dust, but the colour. How Veronese would have painted this dust! . . .

Rembrandt is commonly quoted in defence of dark painting—Rembrandt,

who got his darkness out of yellows and reds, whose gloom warms the eye like glowing coals on which the gases are playing. Rembrandt does not avoid colour, he seeks it to master it. The things he had to say demanded the suppression of all material effects; he banished them to the background, but he never killed them. One always feels as if it would be possible to remove innumerable strata from his pictures, revealing a series of new beauties; the oftener one sees a fine Rembrandt the more one discovers in it.

Our attitude of to-day differs from that of Rembrandt. We are less discreet, and necessarily so, for a revolutionary initiative has been forced on Art, a definite acknowledgment, which must be followed by other professions of faith. The age in which Rembrandt lived permitted him to concentrate himself in a lofty individualism, and to be, if that were possible, the greatest of artists without art. We need more than ever the physics of artistry, because we are seeking a basis for future developments, in order to oppose a new faith to the superstition, which has destroyed all the fundamental laws of craftsmanship.

The instinct of self-preservation forbids us to compare our art with that of Rembrandt. The points wherein the comparison would be in our favour would make us traitors to him; those which would put us at a disadvantage would force us to question the whole logic of our progress.

One could almost wish that certain great factors could be withdrawn from circulation at a period of decisive development, since we are not always capable of attaining to the point whence such factors can be seen to confirm the development, if this be a healthy one. The apparent negation of our purposes by these exemplars perplexes us, and we have not always the courage to recognise that this negation has only to be thoroughly examined to become affirmation. Yet we know by experience that just at the moment of fiercest revolt against tradition the most fruitful results have been won therefrom.

The contrast between Monet and his Scottish contemporaries is perhaps seven times greater than that between Monet and Rembrandt, and the people who are startled by a vivid Monet, are merely suffering, perhaps, from a constitutional inability to distinguish rouge from natural bloom. There are persons with a defective sense for material, who, governed by the same defective instinct, put up with badly proportioned walls, inferior stuffs, and artificial flowers. Between these and the enemies of the new painting, who cannot tear themselves free from the old, there is a noticeable shade of difference. These stand convicted of an anachronism more dangerous and unnatural than the archaism of those who turn to the old methods because present conditions forbid the satisfaction of their definite and more particularly, their indefinite desires. It is anachronism to be incapable of realising that we no longer live in houses such as those in which Rembrandt painted, that Rembrandt is great, not because he worked in the shade, but in spite of it, and that the sun, which Rembrandt saw stealing through the little windows of his low-ceiled rooms to play on the heavy stuffs and gleaming metals of their walls, shines gaily into our dwellings. Archaism may be progression in its infancy, the first step on a new path, as it has often proved in our own times. But the love of Dutch darkness for its own sake, when there are painters like Monet in the world, is retrograde. It is permissible to feel doubtful as to the actual value of pictorial art in the present day; but it is idiotic to hang pictures in our houses which do not even show symbolically the modernity of our developed instincts, and force us, lest we outrage taste, to revive the gloomy interiors of the citizens of the

CLAUDE MONET: STILL-LIFE

PHOTOGRAPH, DURAND-RUEL

seventeenth century. He who seeks in the old masters merely the confirmation of natural perception, has no need of them. They were the vehicles of the impulses of their age, the centres of its culture, the concentrations of its ideas. We are not yet advanced enough to use them, if we are not strong enough to resist them. After the monstrous polygamy of our instinct with all the muses of all the ages and nations, it is time to recognise that salvation lies in the monogamy that produces healthy children. As in every decision of such moment, practical considerations must govern the issue: the healthiest woman, whose person promises most, is the best mate. For such reasons, this modern French art is to be recommended. She is the youngest and healthiest, and we must not reject her, because she is but moderately endowed with nobility of feeling and moral sense.

The Impressionists have given us back normal vision. It is not their genius so much as their healthiness that raises them above the abstract significance of every purely artistic activity of our times, and gives them an aureole no less splendid than the halo that encircles Nietzsche's head. A pious heart was essential to the deepest conception of ecclesiastical art, a flexible mind to the appreciation of the episodic painting of every kind that followed, an apprehension of the current pathos to the monumental compositions of all periods. For this art, the only one proper to us, the requisite is healthy senses. For the ideal of our age, which no less than all other epochs, seeks to reconcile sense and reason, for this religion, which even to-day has its piety, its rapture, its martyrs, this art has painted many an altar-piece. Manet is its genius, Renoir and Cézanne stand like giant Caryatides beside it. Monet may be accounted its best marksman. His importance lies in his healthiness. It is only on materialists that he works materially. No rude awakening from dreams threatens the beauty of the illusions he creates for us; their limitations coincide with those of our modern art. And even on the spiritual side Monet's treatment of his themes has been significant and far indeed from brutal. Is there any more sympathetic conception of Dutch Nature than the *Saardam*, with the two quaint houses by the waterside? * It is more than a landscape. In it Monet has painted the very spirit of the people which delights in landscapes such as this; not otherwise did the old Dutchmen work, who, when they painted the simplest things, painted not only these, but a far-reaching conception of them.

There is a lyric poetry which needs no castles or ruins to call forth its melodious numbers. It inheres in this French Naturalism, swelling to mightiest passion in Monet's famous Belle-Isle series, the triumphant sequel to Courbet's renderings of sea-waves. These marines, superficially mere pictures of the sea, sound depths far greater than Böcklin's naiad-haunted waves, which too often seem to be made of blue tin. The rush of the seething waters round the red-brown fragments of rock, painted with strokes like breakers, sings a mightier song of the greatness of the elements than the sturdiest of the Swiss master's Tritons; and the vast horizon in others, terrific, non-imaginative works, showing nothing but the surface of the waters, are more powerful in their effects than all the famous sea-idyls, with which German museums have been furnished during the past decade. Good painting needs none of these objective monstrosities, and if it makes use of them, it merely plays with them, as the wind plays among the leaves, and does not attempt to give us drama or any other hocus-pocus by their means. It is the attribute of good pictures to affect by brushing and colour. Of course,

* Formerly in the Tavernier collection, now in the Städel Institute, Frankfort.

externals may impede the play of fancy, and it must be admitted that in his later years, Monet seems almost to have invited such a risk. We can pardon the irritation of susceptible persons at his exhibitions in the Georges Petit Galleries, where we occasionally see some dozens of pictures, which show the same section of the same branch in the same meadow, and are only to be distinguished by gradations in the illumination. At a first glance these collections look like great sets of colour-samples, and, indeed, this is what they very probably are. I have seen people collecting more worthless things with enthusiasm. These have at least a hygienic value. After visiting one of these exhibitions I often have the same sensation as after a Turkish bath, a sensation not especially elevating from the moral point of view, but physically pleasant and beneficent. We must not, however, assume à priori that Monet repeated the same bit of Nature again and again in a spirit of mere playfulness, for the same thing has been done by other great artists. That he exhibited such studies is an evidence of the importance he attached to the modification of colour by light. To him, the difference between a tree-stump in the morning and the same in the afternoon was greater than the difference between a man and a woman illuminated by the same sunshine. Of course he carried this somewhat to extremes, especially when we think of the good old times, which had but one illumination for all their requirements—and got it by excluding sunlight ! We must not cavil at the tendency, for to this golden zeal, which has in it something of the touching tenderness of the older Fontainebleau painters, and springs from a deeper consciousness, we owe the rich scale of modern colour. France owes him her relative familiarity with sensations that are not only of service to the painter. The process has perhaps done little to increase an extravagant worship of unapproachable genius, but it brings us closer to art. There is no sorcery in the matter.

Monet reveals himself best—so far as there is anything obscure to reveal—in the garden he has planted about his country house. He has made it on the same principle as his pictures. A mass of red—gigantic carnations—stands against a mass of white lilies ; beside them a forest of glowing sunflowers. Beyond, a tangle of purple blossoms among clusters of glistening green. It is brilliant, because every individual blossom contributes to the mass of colour, and beautiful, because the mass is nevertheless homogeneous, a fair garden full of picturesque delights.

Monet's painting resembles a kind of flower which we can hardly imagine to have existed before our times : the chrysanthemum. He paints forms akin to their clusters of sinuous, slender-tongued petals, yellow without, red within ; to their huge, snow-white ruffles, fit wear for a Pierrot ; to their ragged golden heads, with thread-like reflexed plumes. We recall this flower-like quality when we talk of his colour, or pronounce him a landscape painter or a naturalist. In reality he is a great decorator, who is not afraid to show the means by which he gets his effects. He recognised his own powers when he devoted his best hours to his cathedral pictures, when he poured the lava-stream of his lightning-colour over a huge form which presented itself to him as a piece of Nature. Here he set his brush-strokes side by side, almost like stone against stone, creating a reproduction not unworthy of the original. In the Rouen series there is something of the splendour of the great masters who made human gestures the vehicles of their distribution of light, and Monet, with his little flecks of colour, has given us marvels comparable to those of the great glass-painters, with their scenes from the Passion.

CAMILLE PISSARO: THE EDGE OF THE LAKE (AU BORD DE L'EAU)
(WATER COLOUR)
CHERAMY COLLECTION, PARIS

CAMILLE PISSARO: THE FOUNTAIN OF THE TUILERIES
BERNHEIM COLLECTION, PARIS

In Monet a nervous excitability of temperament wars with the intelligence of the colourist; Courbet's animalism with Delacroix' wisdom. His last period shows the predominance of colour over brushing. He generalises in splendid tones. Many friends of the earlier Monet miss, in his latest renderings of atmosphere, the robustness of the sixties, and are not content with richness of colour. As a fact, even the Monet of the latest period is not merely a colourist. What I said above, of a worthy manner of painting the London mists, was written before the last exhibition of the Thames series. In the interval Monet realised the ideal. In these last pictures we seem to see Westminster Abbey and the bridges gleaming through the prism of a huge brilliant. And this brilliance is not solely due to the palette. Whistler's Nocturnes have shown us what taste in colour means. But put one of these latest Monets beside the most refined of the Chelsea scenes. We shall see then what genius must add to taste to achieve that higher colour which finally triumphs over all the artifices of the palette. Under the glowing mist the old Monet is still vibrating. And this secret art is not unmeet to depict the mystery which the London fog suggests.

With Monet it is impossible not to consider the laws that govern the painter. There are sensitive minds which this artistic analysis revolts; others find it profitable. Monet's successors made this physiology very apparent.

FROM A JAPANESE WOODCUT

SEURAT: BATHING (LA BAIGNADE) FRAGMENT, 1884

FÉNÉON COLLECTION, PARIS

SEURAT AND HIS CIRCLE

THE APOSTLE AND THE CONGREGATION

THE tendency of modern art is towards a transformation of the æsthetic relation between producer and consumer. It aims at giving an ever-increasing activity to the part of the spectator, and at restricting the artist to the presentment of elements deliberately disconnected. Enjoyment is thus made to depend upon a capacity for carrying out a synthesis.

In Daumier we recognised the great conqueror of this fruitful domain, in Manet the most mature and universal form of a synthesis of material. It was inevitable and necessary that the tendency should expand among their successors. This it did in both branches of painting, line and colour. It was only Van Gogh's wide humanity which laid hold vigourously of both ends at once. While he was painting his experiences, the two groups had already parted company. That one stood nearest to him which vainly strove for definitive results under the leadership of his friend Gauguin. We shall find it later on at Pont-Aven. All the more resolute was the action of the other group, which derived from Monet, Pissarro, Guillaumin, and others, and completed what their predecessors had left for them to do. It was the easier part of the task, for the achievement of which logic and an open eye sufficed, the more material part; it left that element of Jongkind that lurked in Impressionism untouched, and held fast to colour. But we shall see that there was at least one among these successors who was not only a disintegrating, but a contributory force.

The older men had discoursed of effects of distance, of a clean palette, of pure colours; they had travelled in the East or had learnt something of the secrets of colour science by studying the methods of distinguished predecessors. There was a shorter, simpler, and much safer way, which the calm speculation of great savants had begun to mark out from the beginning of the nineteenth century, and which was ready by the time Monet's successors set to work. In 1807 the Englishman Thomas Young formulated his theory of the three stimulants of the retina; in 1853 Dove's study on colour was published; in 1864 Chevreul's decisive work* on colour-contrasts, in which the scientist for the first time demanded obedience from the artist. In the eighties important results followed quickly one on the other. In New York, O. N. Rood, in Germany, Helmholtz and many others, shed a flood of light upon the subject and found solutions for all the points with which science is competent to deal.

Once more painters appeared with books under their arms, but these were no longer prescriptions for mythological compositions, dissertations on the ideal, dramas or poems. The volumes looked terribly prosaic, and learned formulæ took the

* "De la Loi du Contraste simultané des Couleurs et de l'Assortiment des Objets coloriés."

place of familiar verse on artistic tongues. Even criticism associated itself with the revolutionaries. Felix Fénéon, one of the few methodical connoisseurs of France, formulated their doctrines. The poet Gustave Kahn became the Baudelaire of the Neo-Impressionists, and fought for them in many instructive essays.* Many other young critics and poets, Lecomte, Christophe, Th. Nathanson, Verhaeren, O. Mirbeau, &c., ranged themselves under the same banner and completed the new syntax.

The coalition of art with science was a result no less natural than that with poetry and music in the days of Romanticism, and infinitely more useful. Its value lay less in the single and easily over-rated result than in the apprehension of the idea that it was well for the artist, no less than for other men, to emerge from his abstract sphere and share in the sympathetic study of Nature characteristic of the age; it was welcome as a symptom of a universal modern attitude.

In the main, it was the realisation of that organisatory idea of Taine's which Zola had developed on other lines in literature. Taine was the first who ventured to discourse to his pupils of the physiology of the ideal; he laid bare the elements of artistic creation with incomparable wisdom. His "Philosophie de l'Art" remains the basis of every reasonable system of æsthetics. None but a Frenchman could have written it. Compare him with Haeckel in his treatment of artistic questions. Taine combined with the acumen of the investigator the marvellous instinct of a race saturated with art. He possessed what Bayersdorfer demanded in the man of science : "an organ for the worlds that still await investigation."

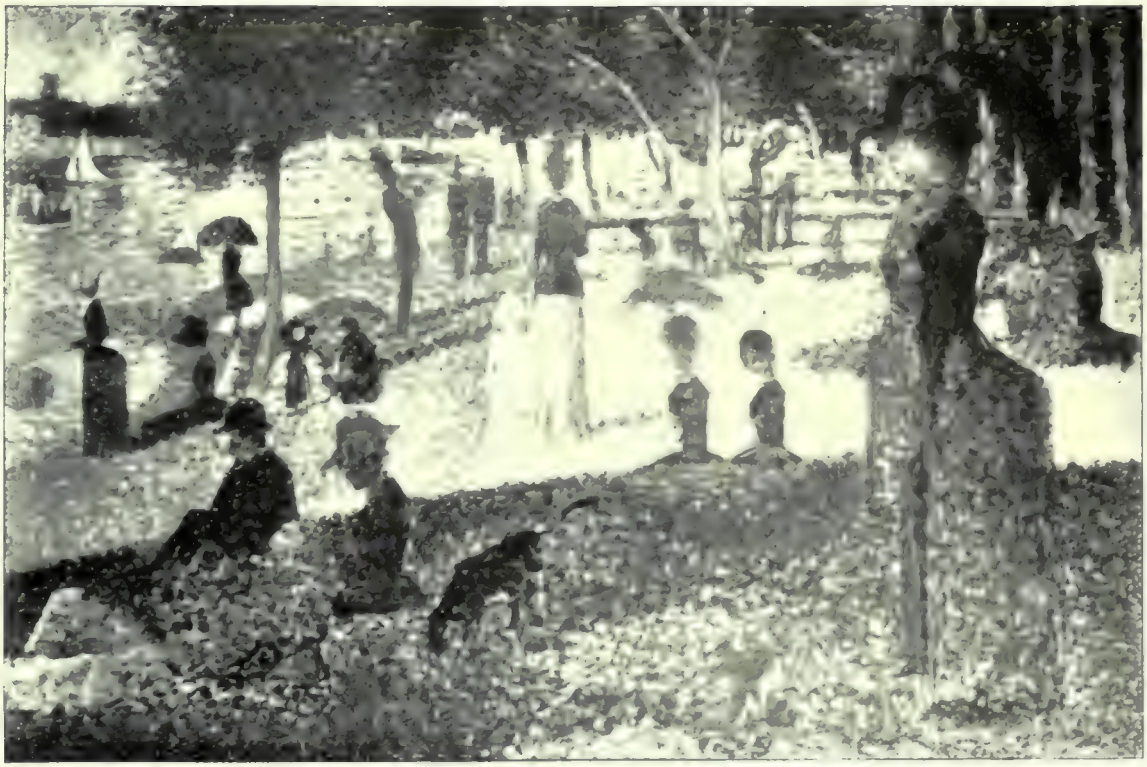
The younger men were well prepared by this method, which succeeded in avoiding the crude distinction between art and science, and yet laid hold of all the physiological elements which could be of service to art. The scientific sense of Neo-Impressionism rested, therefore, on a solid basis. But the great desideratum for its trenchant and logical enforcement was an apostle who should demonstrate the departure unequivocably in his own works.

This apostle came forward in George Seurat.

Seurat, of all who came with him and followed him, was perhaps the only one who needed the technique he found, and in whom it did not tend to destroy any valuable characteristics. Signac does not produce quite the same impression. The recollection of certain early landscapes, † which do not belong to the technique of division, is scarcely to be effaced by the best of his later works. He might have entered the lists with Monet's methods; his individual gifts would hardly have suffered in the process. Seurat, on the other hand, lacked all that distinguished Monet and his circle; he made up for it by something they were without: a purely elementary creative force, directed solely to monumental ends. His very first work, the *Baignade*, a gigantic composition, has the effect of a fresco. The numerous persons bathing or resting on the bank were not put into the picture merely to serve as patches of sunlight. In the carefully considered attitudes there was nothing of Monet; everything, in fact, was opposed to his solvent analysis. A vigourous conventional structure manifested itself, that was not lost in the colour, but

* In "La Vie Moderne," April 9, 1887, and "L'Art Moderne" (Brussels), and "La Vogue" (series ii. 1889, dealing with the Universal Exhibition). Fénéon's best critical efforts are to be found in a little volume long out of print, "Les Impressionistes en 1886" (Tresse and Stock), and in "Les Impressionistes" (Vanier). His short monographs on Seurat, Signac, Luce, Pissarro, Dubois-Pillet, &c., were also published by Vanier. Christophe's notices appeared mainly in "Les Hommes d'Aujourd'hui," already quoted in connection with Van Gogh.

† We reproduce one of these.



SEURAT: SKETCH FOR "LA GRANDE JATTE" 1884

FÉNÉON COLLECTION, PARIS

adorned thereby. Seurat was the outcome, not of Turner, but of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. With Aman-Jean and Ernest Laurent, he was a pupil of old Lehmann, who had worked in Ingres' studio. Fénéon has told me of purely classical school pictures which Seurat subsequently worked over, covering them with his fabric of coloured dots. In the red cap of the boy to the right in the *Baignade*, he had already begun to stipple (*pointiller*)—red on red.* He felt impelled to enliven the smooth monotony of the school-piece, and found a method which was of immense advantage to him in other ways. He was a friend of Charles Henry, the much-criticised Professor and Librarian of the Sorbonne, who had endeavoured, with dubious success, to arrive by a more or less scientific process at the significance of the linear and colour forms from which art may be speculatively created, an expansion of the work of the aged Superville, who wrote the "Essai sur les Signes inconditionnels dans l'Art." Henry helped Seurat to construct a scientific basis.

Seurat's recipe for painting contains two elements: first, a prescription of quantity, which gives a conventional application to Fechner's proposition as to perceptible minima, and requires the laying on of colour in particles the size of which shall be determined by the dimensions of the picture; secondly, a prescription of quality, the unmixed use of the pure colours of the spectrum according to the laws of the complementary problem. This part was taken over almost in its entirety from the Impressionists.

Nothing could have proved more convincing than this simple theory, and no one was better qualified to be its champion than Seurat. His methodical intelligence enabled him not only to communicate it to his friends, but to inoculate them with it. Signac adopted the doctrine at once, and became, if possible, a still more ardent proselytiser, reinforcing the demonstrative force of his brush by that of his pen. When, in 1886, Seurat's *Grande Jatte* was exhibited, Signac was at his side. Both received the storm of abuse that broke over them with perfect equanimity, and repulsed attacks with unruffled logic. In the course of this same year they made a valuable ally in Dubois-Pillet.

Dubois-Pillet was a retired officer of the Garde Republicaine,† who occupied his leisure with painting, and made up for the absence of positive talent by a strong revolutionary strain. He, with many others, had been rejected by the same Salon that refused Seurat's *Baignade*. Following the example of a more distinguished circle of eleven years before, the despised innovators banded together and opened an exhibition on May 15, 1884, in the temporary building of the Tuileries. Dubois-Pillet found that, as before, the Refusés had it in them to stand without the help of the Salon, and, with ready talent for organisation, he founded the Salon des Indépendants, which opened in December 1884, in the Pavillon de la Ville de Paris, in the Champs Elysées. Among the contributions was a study by Seurat for *La Grande Jatte*. Dubois-Pillet the painter was speedily forgotten, but the creator of the Indépendants deserves to be remembered by posterity, as the leader of that first and freest "Secession," in whose galleries so many brilliant talents that but for him might have waited perhaps twenty years for recognition have made their début. The list includes nearly every remarkable French artist of to-day, and many foreigners.

* In this case I must perforce use the term stipple (*pointiller*), so vehemently tabooed by the Neo-Impressionists, for the red dots are on red, and so do not divide colours, but animate the surface. This early departure of Seurat's is not without its significance. It was not until later that he began to set his particles of colour on a white ground. We reproduce the *Baignade*.

† See his biography in "Les Hommes d'Aujourd'hui" by J. Christophe.

The Neo-Impressionists found a hospitable reception here. Adherents multiplied. In 1887 M. Luce and Ch. Augrand joined their ranks, without adopting their technique unreservedly. Cross followed, and the artists of Brussels, where Seurat had exhibited in 1887 and 1889 at the Société des XX. In 1888 his pictures had been shown in Amsterdam, and had been much remarked by the younger Dutchmen. Pissarro's adhesion in 1886 had greatly improved the position of the group. Signac won a disciple in the Comte de la Rochefoucauld, who afterwards broke away to paint his remarkable kakemonos. Ernest Laurent used the divisional technique more or less consistently in his portraits; Lauzet, the delicate engraver of Monticelli, followed for a while; Petitjean and many others threw in their lot with the group.

For the first time since the primitive periods, not only in France but anywhere, there was a programme which brought the will of the individual into subjection to a perfectly organic doctrine. It was the purest abstraction, but in a different sense from that which had become usual. Whereas the painting of Monet abstracted from all the processes of the old masters on behalf of the personality of the author, personality tends to disappear here more and more in a method distinguished from the technical convention of the old masters by deeper research into the laws which the eye obeys. And this doctrine seemed to be not so much the result of research as the product of the art of immediate predecessors, in which the real stimulus to the development so far achieved was rightly recognised. Setting Turner aside, it was enough to point to Delacroix. In his studies on Delacroix' diary * Signac has shown that Delacroix had recognised the principles of colour-division in Constable's works, and had attempted to paint in accordance therewith himself. He points out how in the Louvre picture, *Women of Algiers in an Interior*, the strong colouristic effect is won by gradations and the use of complementary colours, and traces the artist's progressive efforts in every new picture to clear his palette and to give greater animation to his surfaces by division of the brush stroke and of colour. It was enough to develop this evident tendency and to sacrifice the rest. The sacrifice was made in respect of the differentiation of texture as taught by the old Dutch masters. Detail of texture, whether that of the skin or of clothing, was entirely subordinated. Even Monet neglected texture, in comparison with Manet, who treated the physiology of flesh, of flowers, and of stuffs all alike admirably. For Seurat there was but one unity of material: colour.

If this is indeed the essential thing, the conclusion is irrefutable. But the point is obviously not whether this theorem is true or false, but how far it becomes a means in the hand of the artist for utilising all the capacities he can show. Signac rightly judges Delacroix to have been greatly superior to Monet, inasmuch as he produced greater effects by schematic contrasts and by the avoidance of arbitrary mixtures, although his palette was not composed exclusively of the pure colours used by the Impressionists. Monet and Pissarro, revolutionaries far more arbitrary than the painter of *Dante's Boat*, are often much dirtier in their general effects than Delacroix, and as this occurs in pictures which can only justify their existence by the utmost luminosity of tint, the difference appears a deficiency. Not merely a deficiency according to the doctrines of research, but above all a relative deficiency judged by the standard of the aspirations roused by these pictures. Gold must glitter like gold if we attempt to use it for demonstration.

* In the "Revue Blanche" and "Revue Populaire des Beaux Arts." Reprinted in book form as "D'Eugene Delacroix au Néo-Impressionisme," Paris, 1899.

SEURAT: LE CHAHUT (1890)

PHOTOGRAPH BRUET

But with Seurat the actual purpose lay deeper. His most perfect works are, strange to say, his black and white drawings, the remarkable robe of dots in which he draped his classic studies of the nude. I must not, of course, be understood to wish that Seurat had used the same methods in his pictures; I would merely point out the momentous fact that the indescribable unity of Seurat's drawings was hardly achieved in the same convincing fashion in his pictures, and that what is lacking in these—judging them by the high standard of the drawings—could not be supplied by the mere technique of Neo-Impressionism.

This would seem to show that only certain compositions admit of a logical application of the technique—*i.e.*, demonstrable treatment by the method of division. Many of Seurat's marines certainly belong to this class—pictures which show only a skilfully indented bit of shore, a few ships, and a sunlit expanse of sea; as, for instance, the picture in the Osthaus Museum—vast, placid surfaces, where reduction brings out the charms of the original in the most agreeable fashion. Here we have parts enframed by straight lines which urgently demand animation, and here the eye perceives division to be no less necessary in mass than in colour.*

The decisive question thus presents itself automatically: how far is division necessary and reasonable? what laws determine its mechanics, now that its chemistry has been discovered?

It is hardly possible to over-estimate the debt we owe to Seurat for having devoted his powers to this question rather than to technique as such. His methodical mind sought for composition a solution which should go beyond the limits of individual experience, and should call in the aid of science here as elsewhere. All it could say to him he had already learned more easily in the school of that genius who had endowed France with monumental painting: Ingres. He strove instinctively to enlarge this inheritance, and he certainly came to a truer conclusion than those formulated by savants when he adopted the course of development we may now follow distinctly from his first picture, the *Baignade*, to his last, *Le Cirque*. Marines were exercises to him, as portraits were to Ingres; studies made in order to grasp what Nature has to offer of material for decisive tasks. They also made it possible for him to give in certain phases of his development small finished works, where his own purpose did not as yet permit him to achieve greater and more definitive results.

To achieve monumental painting, he started from the law of parallelism, bequeathed to us by the Egyptians, by which all artists who aim at grandeur of effect are more or less consciously enthralled. In his *Baignade* he liquidates the old school, not in technique alone. *La Grande Jatte* is the first picture of the new. This parallelism is terrific in its emptiness: it consists almost entirely of straight lines that run into the picture instead of blending; they are like the beams of a house as yet uninhabitable. It is a poor but a very essential and thoroughly healthy picture. During the next few years, when not occupied with landscapes—and even then the tendency is perceptible—he was absorbed in the study of form suitable for introduction into his space. It was now that he produced those delicious little single figures in colour, and in black and white, in which he sought schematic masses. He sees a slender dancer on the stage with her dress as a triangle (Fénéon's picture); on a plump *coryphée* the skirt becomes a bell (*A l'Eden Concert*, 1866, reproduced in *La Vie Moderne*). In his nude studies he seeks to

* I must perforce use conventional terms here, inadequate though they be. By division of mass, I mean the division of the material apart from colour; by division of colour, the optical division.

resolve the masses into the simplest contrasts; in his wonderful little landscape sketches he shades the planes that Nature shows him. At the end of three years he succeeded in grouping in a large picture several nude figures very effectively posed individually (Count Kessler's *Les Poseuses*), but the decisive line of *ensemble*, a definite rhythm, dominating the whole picture, was still denied him. The next year he found it, on a small scale, in his schematic arrangement of strolling players in a row in front of their booth (*La Parade*, at Messrs. Bernheim's, Paris). In 1889 he made his first success with a large single figure in a fine attitude (*Femme se poudrant*, at Fénéon's), following this up with his first decorative work, *Le Chahut*, of 1890. Before his hand had completed what is in some respects the finest memorial of his genius he has left us, *Le Cirque*, in which he touched his goal, a transition from the harshness of straight lines to the flexibility of curved parallels, the strenuous spirit that had ever striven upwards and knew nothing of decline was quenched for ever.

Like Degas, Seurat took his types exclusively from the theatrical world. Here we find the last of the mortals who still use gestures strongly directed outwards. To the accentuation of the schematic character of this gesture the success of all contemporary spectacle is due. *Le Chahut* is the artistic transference of one of these not inartistic presentments of stage-decoration to canvas. The skeleton of the picture is a pattern of parallel pairs of dancing legs, each of which rests one foot on the inclined plane of the middle distance, and stretches out the other symmetrically in the air. The perfect straightness of these broken parallels is emphasised by the parallel line of the violoncello, which cuts off a corner of the picture full of motives. To make the square distinct on the two empty sides of the picture, the lamps are set along them. A broad stripe runs vertically from top to bottom. This structure is enriched by a wealth of subsystems, such as the beautiful sweep made by the broad white hem of the first dancer's skirt, which encloses a play of parallel pink curves. The only perpendicular figure is that of the 'cello player, a quiet mass, indispensable just where it is, to hide the very sharp angle which would have been formed in the foreground, and to give a vertical element in the lower part of the picture. If the picture has a weak spot, it is certainly here, as this mass is the most independent detail of the whole, and also stands out in the deepest blue tones. The vanishing line of spectators' heads, forming a sharp angle terminating shortly before its junction with that of the plane of the dancers, is a very subtle invention. All the rich details in the upper part of the dancers' bodies, notably the exquisite decoration formed by the eyes, mouths, hair, &c., serve to give the greatest possible variety to the parallel passages, and to emphasise the chief directions. The colour consists exclusively of blue, red, and yellow in equal particles, about the size of the head of a match, on a white ground. The gradations, too, are absolutely schematic.

The advance made on this work in the *Cirque*, with its gleaming yellow curves, marks a further progress in the mastery of composition. All angularity that could be dispensed with has disappeared. The very colour seems softer and rounder. He had conquered the means he had sought after with such mighty efforts, and was capable of coping with the greatest tasks when he died at the age of thirty-one, at the end of March 1891.

PAUL SIGNAC: THE COAST AT PORT-EN-BASSIN
LÉNÉON COLLECTION, PARIS

CLAUDE MONET: THE FIELD OF POPPIES, VETHEUIL 1883
STERN COLLECTION, BERLIN

PAUL SIGNAC

Und wenn die That zuweilen
Ganz etwas anders bringt,
So lasst uns das ereilen,
Was unverhofft gelingt.
GOETHE.

I HAVE shown how, at a moment when his artistic intentions were not as yet clearly recognisable, Seurat invented a technique which may be accepted as the logical consequence of Monet's Impressionism; how he made use of this technique henceforth throughout his life, for the embellishment of his compositions; and how Seurat's individual development to the works of his highest level gave a solution to a problem of monumental art. In this problem the technique of division was only one among many factors. It was the one he found the most rapidly, and preserved much as he found it, without important modifications. On the other hand, he rose gradually higher from year to year in that part of his work which had to do with composition. In this tendency we recognised a desire to approximate to compact, round forms, and to advance from his primitive parallels to a richer linear structure. This progression is apparent in all his works, even in his landscapes, which might be distinguished as of two classes: the primitive straight-lined, and the richer rounded examples.

It now remains to inquire how far the great programme of the school that grouped itself about Seurat has been carried out since his death.

From the first beginnings of Neo-Impressionism, Signac showed himself possessed of a keener sense of the laws of contrast, and greater logic in their application than Seurat. In the exhibition mentioned above, where the *Baignade* made its appearance, Signac was represented by several landscapes, in which the chromatic programme was worked out with far greater mastery. The *Baignade* had fewer pure elements than the contemporary Monets, and only achieved harmony by its consummate artistic tact. Signac's landscapes, on the other hand, present only prismatic colours; and if, in spite of this, they lack the repose of Seurat's large picture, this is due to Signac's inferior command of the division of masses, in which the painter of *La Grande Jatte* was a master from the beginning.

Like Monet, Signac achieved his results by a penetrating study of Nature. Seurat also declared once that he could only paint what he saw. By this he meant to insist that he could not find support in the elements of the Ingres school, but required natural images for his creations. We have seen what he made of these images. Signac, on the other hand, actually kept his eyes on Nature. Gifted with a vision keener than that of Claude Monet, and to be reckoned among the greatest wonders of creation—an anomaly of disposition which sometimes strikes us as incomprehensible—he had the courage to produce the maximum of harmony by a purely scientific process; to determine what were the most purely luminous bodies in Nature, and, relying only on this knowledge, and on an experience chastened by exquisite taste, to paint pictures.

Thus it was that he, and not Seurat, became the creator of this Impressionism, which seceded from Monet's school in order to continue it in the best sense. The method was far in advance of Seurat's doctrine of colour. Compared with the glowing tints and vibrating gradations of tone in Signac's pictures, Seurat's material seems gray and lifeless. Signac modifies the almost mechanical treatment of *La Grande Jatte* and *Le Chahut* by a differentiation that introduces ten values where Seurat was content with one. Even Monet's latest colour-fantasies seem prosaic beside those of his successor, who materialises visions which others only behold in dreams. Modern art here arrives at a goal of development to which centuries have contributed. In his happiest moments he succeeded in giving the modern picture—that makeshift with which we beautify our dwellings—a brilliant and even ideal form, making it a beautiful spot on the wall, that lends itself readily to a frame, and represents, if not all, yet the most valuable thing we need in a rational home—beautiful colour in a beautiful form. In spite of all differences of individual gifts, the stages that lead from Rembrandt's slaughtered ox to Signac's little sea-pieces denote a great advance in the refinement of pictorial art as such, an unmistakable approximation of the modern painter to a solution of the problem: how to give us Nature without hanging it bodily on the walls. In the narrower historic sense, Signac determined the great achievement of the nineteenth century, the creation of landscape. His distant views of Mont St. Michel, compared with Monet's versions of the same theme, are like the tones of a Straduarius after a fanfare of trumpets. They refine the eye to such an extent that it sometimes seems hardly possible to tolerate anything else beside them. The speckly backgrounds that proclaim the fleeting nature of all earthly things even in the most brilliant works of his colleagues, the necessity with many works of finding the right place to view them from, in order to avoid ugly glimpses behind the scenes, are here conspicuously absent, and the chief impression we receive is one of normal healthy beauty.

And in small things at least this art was not lacking in the charms which Seurat sought in great ones. Signac, too, works in arabesque. It serves as a delicate substructure for his vapourous painting. We discover it more especially where he groups masses; one of the most exquisite examples of this is the view of Honfleur in the Kessler collection, here reproduced. Perhaps Signac never composed more happily than here—or it may be that Nature never came to his help in more friendly fashion. Note how delicately the group of trees on the left is balanced by the houses on the right, how exquisitely the steamboat moves along between them, its faint cloud of smoke melting in the warm luminous air. In the group of trees in particular there is a rich play of the most delicate involutions, which run through the mass like coloured veins, and are the medium for the remarkable relations with the surrounding air. Here the problem is solved with positive genius. The colour, too, has extraordinary charm; it is a play of light blues and light pinks, enriched in the masses right and left by perfectly divided yellow deepening to orange, and gaining also immensely by the very varied formation of the colour-particles. For example, whereas the brilliantly observed movement of the water is suggested by horizontal strokes, that increase in vigour in the centre, where the double pink shimmer falls upon it, the glitter of the sunny sky is produced by touches absolutely different in direction. The feathery quality of the trees on the left bank is due to the fact that here the particles of colour are not in relief; the painting is perfectly flat, and even verges on the dreaded fusion of colours.

PAUL SIGNAC: MORNING AT SAMOIS 1900

KESSLER COLLECTION, WEIMAR.

In such pictures—for this work is no solitary example—the problem is solved with a perfection unattainable by any other means. Here division is no longer technique as with Seurat, no makeshift, but the thing itself, a kind of balsam for the eyes. No other means would have approached what is here achieved ; and in the recognition of the appropriate method here shown there is more than intelligence—a clairvoyance that comes near to genius. Signac's gifts seem to me no less manifest in all his little colour-sketches, in which the delicate nervous energy of this doctrinaire breaks out in a few dashes of aquatint, and we see in full perfection all that hovered dimly before the old father of Impressionism, Jongkind.

NEO-IMPRESSIONISM AS AN ART-FORM

If we consider Signac solely as the creator of his best works, as we are bound to do, we shall pronounce him a man full of refinement, intelligence, and artistic sensibility, who delights the eye with exquisite, finely tempered things. But we shall have to judge of him quite differently as the head of a school, the propounder of a theory, the creator of Neo-Impressionism, who is responsible for the far-reaching influence of his work and doctrine on a large circle of like-minded artists.

Signac the theorist does battle for his cause with the logic characteristic of that cause, which is eloquent in the pictures.

When we read the admirable study by Signac mentioned above, we might suppose that Delacroix had existed solely to provide a legacy of evidences for the Neo-Impressionists. Is it really possible to forget the vigourous composition of his early works in the colour of his later period, if indeed we are able to comprehend his genius at all? Such an attitude is as if one should declare Goethe's treatise on colour to be the only thing worth reading among his works. What should we say if yet another should make a claim of the same sort for Turner's *Liber Studiorum*, in which there is certainly far more of the famous Englishman's essential character than there is of Delacroix' individuality in the colour of his Oriental subjects? It was certainly not Signac's intention to raise doubts as to the importance of Delacroix, who did a good deal more than write documents for the Neo-Impressionists. But the marked manner in which a single aspect is here emphasised raises doubts as to the harmony of this conception, and these doubts are justified occasionally in the works themselves of the one-sided disciple. The reverse of the medal appears as soon as we ask how far the Neo-Impressionists may be accounted followers of Delacroix apart from his relative practice of division; what, for instance, is their attitude to his doctrine of composition, concerning which we might also quote from the Journal? This is no arbitrary question, but one very pertinent to the matter.

The well-meaning committee of a certain exhibition once hung even a Turner upside down. Nevertheless, all the earlier moderns clung to a composition which, in spite of all its free reliance upon Nature, retains unmistakable common characteristics. It might be called the centripetal impulse as opposed to the centrifugal style of composition adopted by the men of to-day. With those of 1830, with Delacroix, Manet, Renoir, &c., the effect always works up to a central point, which represents the heart of the picture, and, because it is natural, appears as the organic centre and not as the traditional form. Degas and his school discarded this principle for an asymmetry which serves the same purpose, in spite of the apparent opposition. But in Monet's later works the effect is distributed, and with the Neo-Impressionists the compact pictorial form tends more and more to disappear.

If this essential element in painting were replaced by the tasteful document we might thankfully accept as the product of a period of transition, we might rest

HENRI EDMOND CROSS: FISHERMEN (VAR) 1901

content. But of all the vast output of the Neo-Impressionists, how many of such documents remain, if we exclude Signac's work? And how much of Signac remains if we reckon only his successful essays?

For we cannot account all successful that conforms to Chevreul's law. Chevreul discovered a hygiene of optics, and he deserves all honour for his discovery. It is excellent, as is every hygiene; very important for the general weal of art, but negligible in particular cases. The ideal observance of all hygienic measures would not ensure a comfortable dwelling, and a neglect of very important hygienic rules may at times prove salutary, since all effective action is compromise. The lack of such observance only becomes painful when it is felt subjectively, when we are alarmed in life by the defects of certain conditions of existence, in a work of art by the absence of elementary premises. It is perhaps impossible to produce artistic works which we can use, *i.e.*, take into our dwellings without any relation to the modern theory of colour; for a part of our culture is involved in this development. But it would be breaking down open doors to insist that a relative colour-hygiene will suffice for the creation of immortal and essential works. This relativity is no petty conception of compromise, as Henri Martin's triviality would lead us to suppose. The true relativity is governed by laws much older than the modern theory of colour, laws which served for the guidance of Veronese, Vermeer, and Watteau. It is connected with a question of measure in which it matters less how unity is produced than how the unities are employed. I say "less" advisedly; I do not mean that the creation of this unity, by which I understand the relative purity of colour, could be left to chance; nay, more: if it were possible for an artist to achieve his unity by means of a perfectly pure form, as the doctrine of optical fusion requires, he would undoubtedly deserve all praise. But it would seem incomparably more important that he should advance in the right way from his unity, on the path prescribed by his individual gifts. It is evident that this perfect logic of the artist does not imply an exclusive application of Signac's theories, for otherwise all painters who had ever heard of these theories would accept them. The theory is in itself so essentially correct and irrefutable that we can scarcely understand why Pissarro, for instance, abandoned it after having adopted it when he was already in his maturity. It is against all reason to ascribe its rejection to the obstinacy, ambition, and vanity of artists. Setting aside the fact that the doctrine belongs, not to Signac, but to science, of whom artists can hardly feel jealous, every painter must admit that if he has been able to accomplish something without a severe division of colour, he would probably do better still on a better basis. But if Liebermann, for instance, remains faithful to his own methods, he follows a well-justified instinct which recognises certain indefinable but indispensable conditions of expression as those most favourable to his talent. This all applies to the division of colour, not the division of masses, in connection with which other weighty causes make any attempt at generalisation futile. As an educational factor the value of the Neo-Impressionist colour-programme is unassailable. We may admit that the education of the colour-sense which Signac preaches is wholly beneficent. If this education could penetrate the whole artistic body, if that which seems a bondage now should become an obvious gain, and if, consequently, the whole sum of artistic creation should be directed according to Nature's laws, the world would have made a considerable advance.

Before we inquire by what means this propaganda is carried on, and what relation it bears to other factors of artistic creation, let us briefly consider

the second portion of its programme, its manner of dividing masses. Attacks upon Neo-Impressionism are directed primarily against this aspect of its teaching, its system of handling. And this is, indeed, its vulnerable side. Not theoretically, for nothing that is founded on exact science can be vulnerable. But here the scientific proposition is so right that it almost becomes wrong: it establishes a principle, that of division into particles, but it allows so much latitude in the manner of the division that it practically determines nothing. The interpretation becomes radically false, if it prevents the artist from exercising the gift we reverence in the art of brushing. Here we are not dealing with a unity which under certain conditions replaces freedom by reflection, but with a natural gift which not only determines the composition of the work of art, but, taken in the abstract, is one of the essential factors in the effects which sum up the evolution of the plastic arts. To abolish this mysterious liberty would be to touch the life itself of art. And as long as it represents not only one of the few joys of the eye, but also the mysterious creator of value, to whom we look for important advancement of the problems that lie beyond the painting of pictures, it must be very carefully handled. The value of the great works of 1870 lies not only in composition, not only in colour, not only in gradation of tone, but also in the wielding of the brush, which, as the vehicle of the linear element, expresses all the intimate charm that the suggestion of the material object affords us.

But do the Neo-Impressionists give an equivalent for this, even in their own sphere? Do they, if we judge them on their average, and not on a few brilliant works, achieve that normal pictorial excellence which they claim to ensure?

Here, as I have said, there is no theoretic certainty. The touch is to be determined by the size of the picture. Is it to be measured by the centimetres of the frame, and not rather by the unity of size which is the basis of the picture? Seurat used particles which, at the normal distance from which we view a picture, produce optical fusion; he achieves the vibration so advantageous to his large surfaces by very simple means. Many Neo-Impressionist pictures—some indeed of Signac's works, more especially the larger ones—fail to meet this requirement, which should be a matter of course with them. They do not blend. The particles and the distances between them become so large that the quiet general effect is destroyed. The picture is an aggregation of separate effects.

Here we approach the point at which Neo-Impressionism, as represented by its latest disciples, is condemned by its own logic.

If we are to believe that the external fusion of the elements in a picture is unnecessary to the picture in everything outside the pure colour harmony, and that this alone is enough to fulfil the purpose of a work of art, we find ourselves in the domain of more or less abstract ornament. Indeed, a masterly juxtaposition of splashes of colour *will* produce ornamental effects. If this be the object in view, it is difficult to see why every means should not be employed to make these effects as rich as possible, and it is obvious that artists like Vuillard or Bonnard, who bring all the possibilities of mosaic effects into their domain, are richer than the Neo-Impressionist, who admits but a limited number of these possibilities. But if it is merely a matter of ornament, the discussion comes to an end, after it has gradually dawned upon souls fully alive to ornament that ornament for its own sake is a lovely but peculiarly superfluous pastime, just as demonstrable in its most secret nature as other things which are without objective.

For thirty years and more we have been trained to the appreciation of "pointil-

DEGAS: MDLLE MALOT, DANCER (1870)
(PASTEL)
BLANCHE COLLECTION, PARIS

lisme" ; we have reviewed the old art by its standard, and have made many reversals of judgment which have enriched us. But if the Neo-Impressionists, who aspire to direct individuality logically, rely upon the effect produced by these touches of pigment as such—in other words, if they see in the spot of colour, not merely a particle governed by a higher purpose, but something abstract which, though dispensing with individuality of treatment, demands individual vision, they not only stultify their own logic, but compel us to an aimless renunciation. Manet possesses the mysterious faculty of giving impressions that suggest the greatest things, in two or three swift strokes ; this is the mastery of a gifted hand which can only express itself powerfully and creatively. To deprive such genius of inspiration would be to approximate pictorial art to a highly developed form of house-painting. For this we have as yet no use.

Seurat recognised this, or rather he was so radically strong and healthy that it never occurred to him that the particle might become an end in itself. He may have followed the one-sided development of the doctrine with which he was himself identified at the outset, with quiet amusement. Now he would probably feel alarmed, and seize his brush with redoubled energy to complete his task. This completion is still lacking in Neo-Impressionism. It has created a material as inspiring to the great creator, dreaming of monumental tasks, as is a finely veined marble to the sculptor. Wisely employed, it is the most brilliant of materials if there is a question of returning to those tasks which once sufficed to art, before the difficult task of providing artistic joys for others was laid upon individuals. This, the most logical of all perceptions, we shall seek in vain in Neo-Impressionism. Seurat has remained the great primitive ; his achievement has scarcely found one to prosecute it among his disciples, whereas what he used as a means has grown into innumerable ends. With the exception of the Belgians, not one of the original group has conceived the idea of building with this exquisite building material.

To this we sometimes hear the retort that it is not the fault of Neo-Impressionism if the State and the private patron keep their walls to themselves. A dozen martyrs are to the fore in the twinkling of an eye.

But we are by no means convinced that the originators of the art designed it primarily for large surfaces. It may be a result of our crazy culture that they no longer desire what their predecessors had accustomed themselves to forego. But even if they did desire it, the exclusive suitability of a technique for certain unattainable purposes would not excuse its partially perverted application to those at our disposal. Signac and Cross, moreover, have proved conclusively how perfectly adapted the technique is even to the most idyllic landscapes. That which is not always adaptable is themselves, and the more they demonstrate the indubitable justness of their theory the more arguments they adduce for their own relative incapacity for certain tasks. The technique of Neo-Impressionism and that of the Neo-Impressionists of to-day are two absolutely different things. What we have to urge against it applies not to the theory, but to current practice. It is true that no other technique admits of such luminous power in the surface ; but there are hundreds of Neo-Impressionist pictures which are by no means luminous. They do not produce a luminous effect in the only right sense, which conceives of this quality, as of every other, relatively. The art-loving eye desires to see the conception of luminosity ennobled by deeper aims, just, necessary, and creative. The majority of these pictures are uninteresting. They do not give us what they could

and ought to give. They seek what is not within the province of the technique, or give only what lies within that province, without giving art. They are, naturally, helpless before the individual in Nature : the most precious quality in Nature, her wealth of material, is interpreted by a technique which uses the same form to suggest the flesh of a woman's breast and the flagstaff of a sailing-boat. Movement in Nature easily becomes with them a kind of paralysis, the more obvious for being richly adorned with colour. If they work out an idea strictly according to their principles, everything impels them to a purely decorative treatment, in which all that works prejudicially to them in a picture by reason of their narrowness may turn to their advantage.

It is therefore impossible to exclude the question of purpose, when achievement tends, more than in any other artistic movement, to confine itself to means. And the simple retort that the demand for form, for the vessel that should contain all these lights and colours, is wide of the mark, and that the justness of the Neo-Impressionist theory is not to be impugned by an element which that theory leaves untouched, is not conclusive. For as soon as Neo-Impressionism manifests itself as Painting, it must be judged not on its Neo-Impressionistic, but on its pictorial merits. The law of its being only becomes logical and valuable if it is subordinated to the law of the more comprehensive style. Here the particularity once so decisive may easily become of slight importance and all the wordy theorising may be made abortive by the far-reaching achievement of a great unconscious master bound by no rules, yet able to reach our emotions. Was it not Delacroix, the buckler of the Neo-Impressionists, who made the blunt assertion : " Donnez-moi de la boue, je vous ferai des chefs-d'œuvre ! "

DEGAS: COMING FROM THE BATH (LA SORTIE DU BAIN)
(PASTEL)
TAVERNIER COLLECTION, PARIS

NEO-IMPRESSIONISM IN BRUSSELS

NEO-IMPRESSIONISM would seem specially adapted for a great school, governing a colossal style, for a scheme such as that conceived by the unhappy idealist Van Gogh, who dreamt of the impersonal expression of the individual in favour of a mighty collective activity. The one thing lacking is style, the element which worked so powerfully a thousand and two thousand years ago for the mosaicists, the predecessors of the Impressionists.

Whether this will come or not, remains to be seen. The result is happily quite independent of the fate of contemporary Neo-Impressionists. However pessimistic our attitude towards certain achievements of the group, we see a rich prospect before them in fields as yet unexplored. Even Denis owes a good deal to their technique, and outside Paris, results are manifesting themselves in rich abundance. France is perhaps least adapted, of all places, for its further evolution. For a century past it has teemed with collectors, and artists come into the world with an instinctive readiness to satisfy their demands. The task of propagation seems to devolve naturally on countries which have further goals in view, and so will not allow Neo-Impressionism to detain them over long.

Belgium first approached Seurat with the idea of continuing him. Finch, the most active of the little colony which afterwards settled in Brussels, took the first step. Whistler taught him to etch. He painted subdued sea-pieces at Ostend, and longed for colour. His English blood gave him decorative aptitudes. In the new doctrine he found authority for a flat painting, for which he foresaw greater facilities in Belgium than in Paris. When Octave Maus founded the Société des XX at Brussels, just when the Indépendants formed their society in Paris, a good deal of enthusiasm was shown in Paris, though on what grounds it was not quite clear. The Twenty, among whom was Finch, consisted of very different elements,* young and old, and they invited all sorts of artists to exhibit as guests. Whoever was seeking out new paths, and was capable of giving expression to his ambitions, was welcome. The foreign visitor owed Les XX the revelation of many obscure talents, as for instance, the great Henri de Braekeleer, with his inimitable interiors, the aged Xavier Mellery with his delicious little peasant pictures, and, last not least, Constantin Meunier. Scarcely one of the great Parisians was unrepresented. Rodin, who had worked in Brussels as a young man, was better known there at first than in Paris; Pissarro had many good friends in Belgium. When Seurat appeared, Les XX gave him a brilliant reception.

* The twenty were: Achille Chainaye, Franz Charlet, Guillaume Charlier, Henri de Groux, Dario de Regoyos, Paul Dubois, James Ensor, A. W. Finch, Fernand Khnopff, Félicien Rops, Willy Schlobach, Jan Toorop, Theo van Rysselberghe, G. van Strydonck, Isidore Verheyden, Guillaume Vogels, Rodolphe Wytsman, and one woman, Mlle. Anna Boch. Octave Maus was the secretary, and the treasurer made up the score. Later, Van de Velde, Lemmen, and Minne joined. The exhibitions were much smaller than those of the Indépendants, where all works sent in were hung without reference to a jury. In Brussels they showed a happy talent for selection, and their exhibitions still linger in the memory as ideal. When, after a distinguished career of ten years, Les XX became La Libre Esthétique (1894), the exhibitions became more extensive, but they lost something of their artistic prestige in the process, though many of these exhibitions may also be recalled with pleasure.

In Brussels, Neo-Impressionism was less a school of painting than a practical art programme of a comprehensive nature: to one group among Les XX, comprising the most vigorous spirits of the association, it gave a system of colour. They were, in addition to Finch, Theo van Rysselberghe, Henri v. d. Velde, George Lemmen, and Anna Boch. As a painter, Rysselberghe was the happiest among them. He was a native of Ghent (b. 1862), and when Seurat made his discovery, he was still young enough to crown an education by individual fruition. To him, as to many others, the exhibition of *La Grande Jatte* in Paris in 1886 was a revelation. He is sharply differentiated from the Parisian painters in this respect: he saw in the technique a means of rendering the human figure, the essential element of all monumental painting. He began with portraits. A journey to Morocco in the winter of 1887 withdrew him, to his great advantage, from the narrow sphere of the group. It may be that he saw larger lines in the East. In 1890 he painted his *Femmes dans un Verger*, in which his personal aptitude for decoration on a grand scale stands revealed. He had not as yet made himself master of a strong system of composition; his gift was manifested in the long series of portraits to which he devoted himself almost exclusively for six years. In these single figures, which he set very effectively in the allotted space, he learnt the division of the surface. An unerring taste preserved him from the temptation to essay superfluous ornament in details, which seduced Signac into the curious rainbow caricature of Fénéon.* The large group with which he concluded the series seems to set the coping-stone on this portraiture.

All Rysselberghe's works are rhythmic creations. The art he offers us does not, perhaps, always spring from very profound sources. His conception sometimes recalls Besnard's loose manner. But if it rarely rises to the lofty altitudes of art, it avoids its cliffs; and it is entitled to respect in these days, as the endeavour of a simple, healthy person to use his art reasonably. In his first great decoration, *L'Heure Chaude*, our satisfaction in the very pleasing bathers is marred by the lack of distinction. The picture has undeniable charms, but they lie rather too flat. The composition, again, lacks firmness; it slips from the right—the group on land—to the left, where the girls are playing in the water, instead of merely leading the eye along. We note the influence of the flimsy Paris Salon, not that of the great French tradition to which Seurat owed so much. All the more do we rejoice in the advance on this work which marks the Solvay wall-paintings, in which Rysselberghe's best qualities have all combined for the creation of a modern idyl, a masterpiece of the school and, indeed, of contemporary art.

Neo-Impressionism has served the other Bruxellois as a point of departure for industrial art. Finch became a potter. About 1895, Count Sparre took him to Helsingfors, where he directs the manufacture of china by the peasants, though he has not abandoned painting. Lemmen is indebted to the school for the fine colour of his decorations on canvas and paper, in glass mosaic, and carpets. But he perhaps owes more to Seurat the draughtsman than to Seurat the painter. At least, his charcoal portraits heightened with colour seem to me by far the most remarkable productions of his early period. A portrait group of three women exhibited several years ago at the Libre Esthétique Gallery combined a peculiarly firm grasp of physiognomy with a firmly knit and finely balanced form. The brilliant

* It figured in the exhibitions of the early nineties under the characteristic title, *Sur l'émail d'un fond rhythmique de mesures et d'angles, de tons et de teintes, portrait de M. Félix Fénéon*, and was not the only unfortunate essay made by Signac.

DEGAS: THE DANCING-LESSON

BLANCHE COLLECTION, PARIS

typographist stood revealed in the rhythmic lines, and yet one could not avoid the impression that the work was a faithful portrait. The manner did not appeal to every one. If Rysselberghe sometimes appears frivolous, a perfect type of the modern enterprising Belgian, the old slow Flemish blood still flows in the veins of Lemmen, and seems almost antagonistic to the new form. His performance is never trivial; he has indeed given us magnificent inventions, but his very richness is sometimes oppressive; we are no longer accustomed to such opulence. His rhythm inclines to breadth, like his ornament, which, in contrast to Van de Velde's slender line, covers as much surface as possible. Nevertheless—and this is his most beneficent quality—we shall never find a line in Lemmen that is not his own. He has been strangely, we might almost say fortunately, neglected by modern industry, for his ill success has driven him back to painting. For the last few years he has been producing delightful interiors with very refined colour and a draughtsmanship neither more nor less intent on arabesque than that of the old Netherlanders. Unpretentious as they are, these pastels seem to me to represent the most cultivated painting of contemporary Belgium; they are the equivalent in Brussels for Vuillard in Paris. Lemmen's sojourn in the domain of decoration has given firmness to his hand: he is harsher than the Parisians, less amazing than Bonnard, less subtle than Vuillard; but, on the other hand, he gives something no less independent in simpler form. He remains a Fleming, unconcerned with the fluctuations of the artistic life about him, and intent on continuing the glorious tradition of his native land, to which end De Braekeleer also worked.

Of all the Belgian Neo-Impressionists, Van de Velde was the one who remained exclusively a painter for the shortest time, if indeed he was ever so. His development into the artist we now honour was in no sense due to Seurat's school. I shall try to indicate his importance in a later chapter.

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Thus in little Brussels we see Art mingling its current with Life, and this result suffices to glorify the whole Impressionistic development. It may even justify its perfunctory painting, the conditional nature of its technique—indeed, its whole existence. Even now many of the Impressionists' pictures are falling from the canvas like crumbling ashes; others are turning to colourless dust within their frames. The very splendour that most delighted contemporaries has been the first to perish. Yet if we think of the results, for the moment most evident in Brussels, but daily manifesting themselves more and more clearly wherever colour is being used, our melancholy at the evanescence of these documents is relieved by the glad reflection that the light they gave us was not extinguished until it had revealed the way of the future.

FROM A DRAWING BY GEORGE LEMMEN

FROM AN ETCHING BY HENRI DE BRAEKELEER

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